



# YEARS OF **BOLD RESEARCH**

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2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends,

As we look back over the past half of a century of BrightFocus Foundation, we celebrate our commitment to funding research that brings us closer to cures and cast a vision for what’s to come.

BrightFocus Foundation continues to expand its reach and impact across the globe. Over the past 50 years, we have nurtured and supported thousands of brilliant minds and renowned scientists across 25 countries, including two Nobel laureates, leading to new discoveries that help shape the field, and launching Alzheimer’s research programs in four countries. We’ve also shared valuable information and multilingual resources with millions of people.

This year marks a significant milestone as we celebrated our 50th anniversary and five decades of fueling the most promising and innovative biomedical research. The eye is the window to the brain, and through funding cross-disease research and rock-star scientists, we have developed a better understanding of these diseases, leading to treatments and diagnostic tools that improve lives.

In 1982, BrightFocus funded research supporting the artificial heart, a long-pursued holy grail of modern medicine, by providing critical early funding to Dr. Willem Kolff, a Dutch physician known as the father of artificial organs. Since then, we’ve funded numerous advancements, including the discovery of novel genetic risk factors for Alzheimer’s, macular degeneration, and glaucoma; pioneering blood-based screening tests for Alzheimer’s disease; and the first optical test to diagnose Alzheimer’s—innovations that are making a lasting impact for generations to come.

This remarkable scientific impact is made possible because of gifts from half a million individuals and families supporting science to defeat Alzheimer’s disease, macular degeneration, and glaucoma. Together, we’re unstoppable. Thank you.

With hope and gratitude,



**Stacy Pagos Haller**  
President and CEO



**Patricia McGlothlin Stewart, CFP**  
Chair, Board of Directors

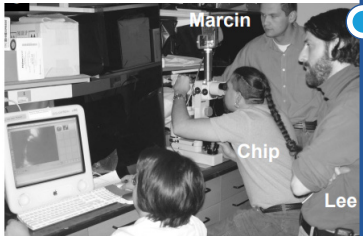
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50 Years of Life-Changing Breakthroughs



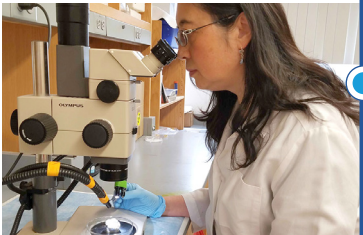
**1982**  
BrightFocus funded early research supporting the **first permanent artificial heart transplantation** and the development of the first artificial kidney.



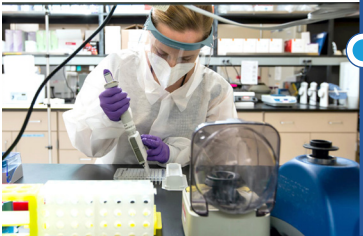
**2003**  
Following their discovery that Alzheimer’s can be detected in the lens of the eye, Dr. Lee Goldstein and team developed **new optical tests** to help better diagnose and monitor the disease from its early stages.



**2005**  
We supported fundamental research leading to the discovery of the **first anti-VEGF treatment** for wet age-related macular degeneration—still the gold standard for helping to slow or stop vision loss in wet AMD patients today.



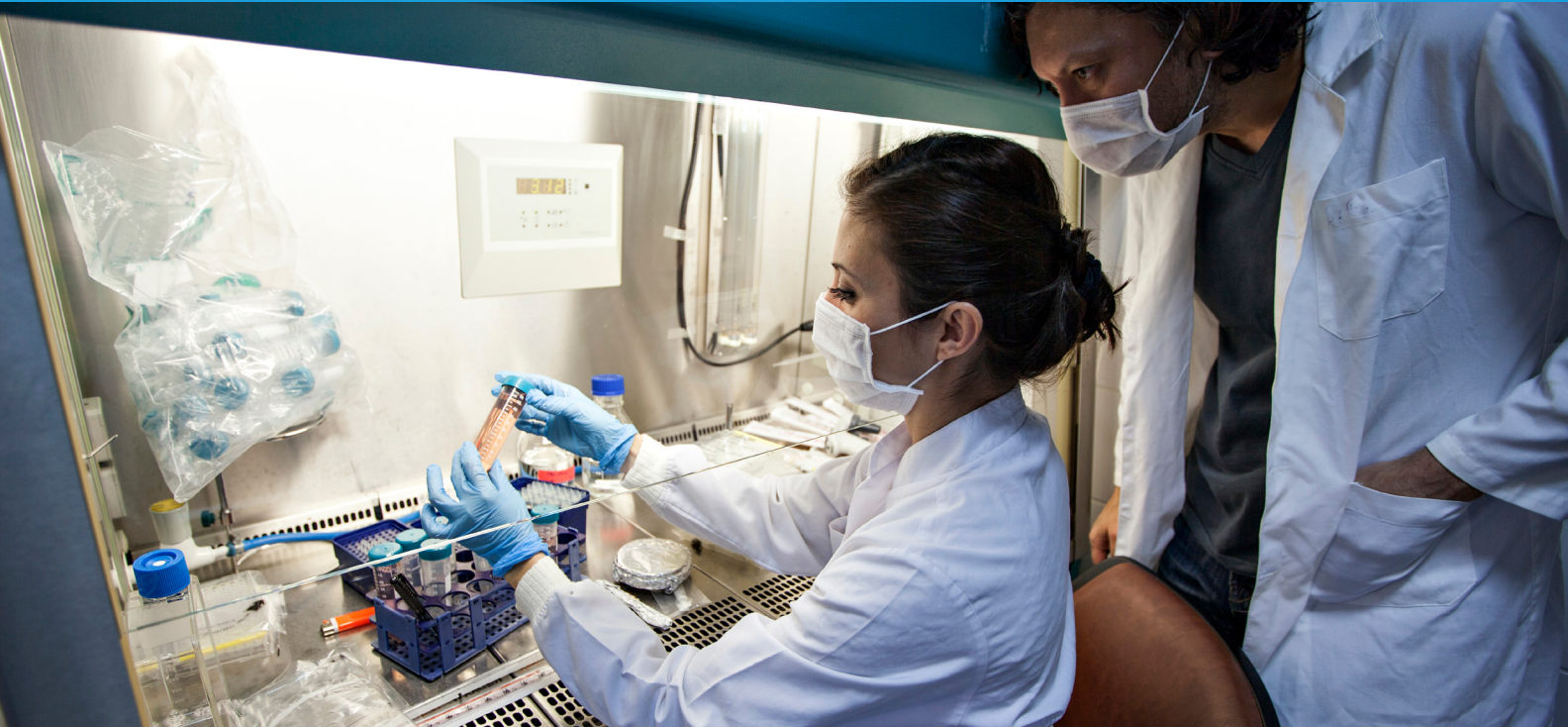
**2017**  
BrightFocus-funded research laid the foundation for the **first FDA-approved ROCK inhibitor for glaucoma**, the first new class of medications for this disease in over 20 years.



**2020**  
Alzheimer’s Disease Research grantees developed the **first commercially available blood test** in the U.S. to identify early signs of Alzheimer’s disease.



**Explore more breakthroughs**



## Our Approach to Research

**BrightFocus Foundation**, through our programs Alzheimer’s Disease Research, Macular Degeneration Research, and National Glaucoma Research, is on a mission to cure Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias and stop vision loss in its tracks.

We believe that by providing initial funding for highly innovative experimental research and creative ideas, we can spark revolutionary approaches and life-saving breakthroughs for Alzheimer’s disease, macular degeneration, and glaucoma.

For the last 50 years, we’ve funded the boldest research and what-if ideas to get us closer to cures, resulting in the novel treatments and diagnostic tools in use today. We also raise awareness and empower people with these diseases and their loved ones by sharing expert resources and information.

Our community of more than 670,000 donors is urgently investing in the research they care about the most to get us one step closer to ending these diseases—because our future depends on it.

By providing funding for highly innovative experimental research and creative ideas, we fuel revolutionary approaches and life-saving breakthroughs.



Through our grants, BrightFocus Foundation continues to advance groundbreaking mind and sight research across the globe.

## By the Numbers



**323 million**

people reached annually through our education and awareness efforts

## Since inception

**6,240**

scientists supported across 25 countries

Nearly  
**\$290 million**

in research grants awarded

**“Innovative research by BrightFocus offers me hope. I am hopeful that one day, researchers will discover cures for all dementia diseases. Faith and hope are my helpers.”**

**Chris Tann**  
*Diagnosed with  
frontotemporal dementia*



## Innovative Research Leads to Breakthroughs

Our grants leave no stone unturned, exploring the full range of scientific paths toward better treatments and ultimately a cure for a disease that affects more than 55 million people worldwide and is the **seventh-leading cause of death** in the U.S.

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, Alzheimer's Disease Research has awarded more than \$175 million to date to better understand and cure Alzheimer's disease.

Over the last year, researchers tackled the disease from all angles, developing and testing thousands of hypotheses about how Alzheimer's begins and progresses to develop earlier detection strategies and novel treatments. **Read about a few of the research breakthroughs you helped make possible.**

### First-of-its Kind Artificial Intelligence Model for Alzheimer's on a Routine Eye Scan

Most people who visit the optometrist undergo a scan of the retina, a region at the back of the eye that is directly connected to the brain. Through the optic nerve, this connection offers a noninvasive window onto disease-related processes in the brain.

Tiny changes in this area have been associated with Alzheimer's disease, drawing attention to the scans as a potential screening and detection tool.

Researchers led by Alzheimer's Disease Research grantee **Carol Cheung, PhD**, at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Faculty of Medicine have trained an artificial intelligence (AI) model to pick out retinal scan features associated with Alzheimer's disease. The AI they developed can quickly analyze images and identify scans from people with Alzheimer's disease with high accuracy, even in the presence of co-occurring eye diseases like macular degeneration and glaucoma.



Automated screening of retinal images would be much faster than current approaches and could reveal the disease in its early stages.

Having shown that the AI works on images from people representing a variety of different ethnic backgrounds and geographic regions, Dr. Cheung and colleagues plan to formalize and integrate the AI with retinal scans as a part of routine eye exams. People undergoing the scans could receive their results immediately and benefit from early intervention and treatment.

### Insomnia Treatment Shows Promise as Alzheimer's Therapy



A new study has found that an FDA-approved sleeping pill may slow or stop the progression of Alzheimer's disease by reducing levels of Alzheimer's proteins in the brain.

The study involved a sleeping aid known as suvorexant a prescription medicine marketed under the brand name Belsomra. It is in a class of medications called orexin receptor antagonists and works by blocking the action of a natural substance in the brain (orexin) that causes wakefulness.

The research team, from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, was led by Alzheimer's Disease Research grantee **Brendan Lucey, MD**.

Although the study was small and further investigation is needed, the results are promising and have sparked further research.



## Targeted Tau Measure Beats Other Biomarkers for Early Neurodegeneration Detection



Although it has been shown that early detection can help delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease, there is a lack of definitive and affordable tests to do so.

The holy grail has been a blood test for Alzheimer's disease, a handful of which are now available in the U.S.

A new blood test developed by Alzheimer's Disease Research grantee **Thomas Karikari, PhD**, an assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh, and his colleagues detects a less frequently measured biomarker of Alzheimer's disease neurodegeneration in the blood: brain-derived tau, or BD-tau, which could enable earlier detection of the disease.

Current blood tests for Alzheimer's disease evaluate the content of three proteins—amyloid-beta, tau, and neurofilament light chain—as a marker of neurodegeneration. A drawback is that neurofilament light chain can indicate many other neurodegenerative disorders and does not specify Alzheimer's disease.

Measuring brain-derived tau in the blood could specify Alzheimer's disease, improving on the less-targeted results with neurofilament light chain. Dr. Karikari and his team have met this need by developing an immune protein, or antibody, that binds only to tau derived from the brain.

Brain-derived tau testing likely would not replace current blood tests but instead would serve to round out the blood biomarker suite. It also is poised to become an important research tool for tracking neurodegeneration and gaining a better understanding of the arc of Alzheimer's disease.

## Green Tea Compound Opens Door to New Paths in Alzheimer's Research

Using a molecule found in green tea, a team of biochemists have identified new molecules that can destroy protein tangles in the brain linked to Alzheimer's and related brain diseases.

One of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's is tangles of tau proteins. When small phosphorus-containing molecules called phosphates attach to tau in specific places, the spiral proteins pair up and entangle inside nerve cells, interfering with their signaling.

A green tea compound, epigallocatechin gallate, or EGCG, can break up tau protein pairs in lab studies but does not pass readily from blood to brain, making it a poor drug candidate.

Yet other similar molecules might be able to pass into the brain. Banking on this possibility, investigators including Alzheimer's Disease Research grantee **Paul Seidler, PhD**, at the University of Southern California, went on a quest for candidates. Several molecules stood out for busting up tau tangles and stopping their cell-to-cell spread.

"If we could break up these fibers, we may be able to stop death of neurons," said study author

**David Eisenberg, PhD**, a UCLA professor of chemistry and biochemistry whose lab led the new research.

The molecules the researchers plucked from their searches—currently bearing the generic names CNS-11 and CNS-17—are not confirmed therapeutics for Alzheimer's disease and will have to undergo the usual rigors of the drug development pipeline.

But this work has broader implications. The characterization of EGCG-tau interactions allowed for automated searching among thousands of molecular candidates, introducing a drug discovery strategy for Alzheimer's disease that already is commonly used for cancers and metabolic conditions.

"The bottom line," said Dr. Eisenberg, "is we've put Alzheimer's disease and amyloid diseases in general on the same basis as cancer, namely, that structure can be used to find drugs." In this way, EGCG from green tea has opened the door to a world of possibilities.



## Next-Generation Blood Test Got Its Start with Alzheimer's Disease Research Funding

A next-generation Alzheimer's blood test could facilitate a more accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease in its earlier stages at a reduced cost. The new test, expected to launch in 2023, is an update to the existing PrecivityAD blood test, which received critical early support from Alzheimer's Disease Research.

Like the current blood test, the new PrecivityAD2 blood test measures the ratio of two types of amyloid-beta protein in the blood. But the new test also measures tau, another key protein involved in Alzheimer's disease.

Scientists believe that amyloid-beta and tau interact in ways to make Alzheimer's disease progress. Clinical study findings suggest that this combination performs as well as imaging and cerebrospinal fluid testing.

PrecivityAD2 got its start in studies conducted by former Alzheimer's Disease Research grantees

**Randall Bateman, MD**, and **David Holtzman, MD**, both of Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis; Dr. Holtzman also is co-chair of the BrightFocus Alzheimer's Disease Research Scientific Review Committee.

The two partnered with biotech entrepreneurs **Phillip Verghese, PhD**, and **Joel Braunstein, MD, MBA**, to form C2N Diagnostics, which developed the original iteration of the test, PrecivityAD, with Alzheimer's Disease Research support.

With PrecivityAD2, clinicians in most cases will have the option to avoid the need for additional cerebrospinal fluid or amyloid PET imaging to help promptly rule in or rule out the presence of amyloid plaques for their patients with cognitive impairment, Dr. Braunstein explained.

This could speed up diagnosis and treatment access at reduced costs.

## Tau Protein, Partner to Amyloid-Beta, Takes Center Stage as Marker of Early Disease

Recent studies highlight how tau protein and amyloid-beta interact in a snowball effect, promoting each other's disease-related behavior and confirming a key role for tau in early detection of Alzheimer's disease.

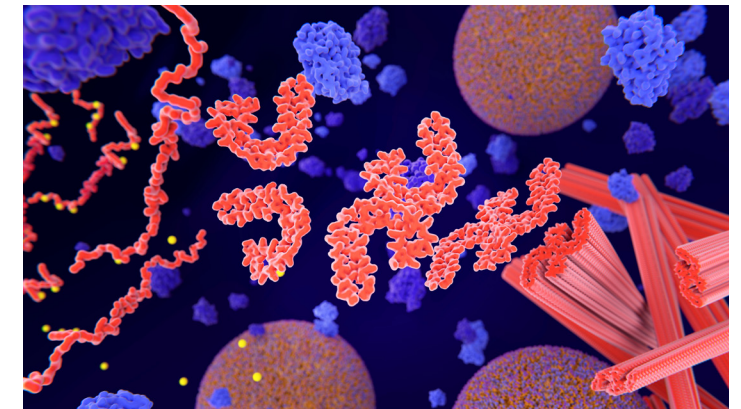
Tau has emerged as an early marker of Alzheimer's disease, potentially detectable before cognitive impairment or other symptoms arise.

The studies were conducted by Alzheimer's Disease Research grantee **Alexa Pichet Binette, PhD**, of Lunde University in Malmö, Sweden.

In one study of older adults without cognitive impairment, Dr. Binette and her colleagues found that those with high accumulations of amyloid-beta and tau on brain imaging had much greater odds of later developing dementia or cognitive impairment. Intriguingly, people with no detected tau—with or without amyloid-beta—did not have this increased risk.

The implications are that tau and its interactions with amyloid-beta are central to the development of Alzheimer's disease.

A second study from Dr. Binette and her team further underscored the significance of tau and its interactions with amyloid-beta. They found a close association between tau tangle accumulation in the brain and increasing levels of disease-related tau in cerebrospinal fluid in early-stage Alzheimer's disease.



*Misfolded tau proteins (red-orange) form tangles, which disrupt neurons.*

High cerebrospinal levels were linked to rapid tau tangle accumulation during this early stage and to amyloid-beta's effects on tau buildup. In later Alzheimer's disease stages, though, levels of the disease-related tau in cerebrospinal fluid plateaued, and cognitive decline started to track with tau accumulation in the brain.

"Overall, tau pathology is playing an increasingly central role in improving prognosis accuracy and disease mechanisms," Dr. Binette said.

These discoveries not only position tau as a major marker of Alzheimer's disease stage but also draw focus to it as a potential target for treatments.

Some of the key discoveries highlighted in this year's annual report reinforce tau's centrality to Alzheimer's.



**"Overall, tau pathology is playing an increasingly central role in improving prognosis accuracy and disease mechanisms."**

**Alexa Pichet Binette, PhD**

"More funding for bold research that becomes available for macular degeneration will help to save the vision of people as they age. Saving one's vision leads to a much more prudent, successful, and independent life."

**Jill Adelman, RN**  
*Diagnosed with age-related macular degeneration in 2014*



## Advancing Novel Findings About Macular Degeneration

We accelerate groundbreaking research to better understand the root causes of and prevention strategies for macular degeneration, the **leading cause of blindness** in people over age 50 worldwide.

Through the generous support of our donors, Macular Degeneration Research has awarded nearly \$50 million to date to fund critical research on the disease's causes and potential prevention, treatment, and cure.

Our grantees have explored numerous promising avenues of research that cover a broad array of innovative scientific approaches. **Read about a few of the research breakthroughs you helped make possible over the last year.**

## Is Inflammation the Answer? A Potential Future Treatment for Age-Related Macular Degeneration

There is strong evidence that inflammation plays a role in the development and progression of age-related macular degeneration. Now, a drug approved to treat autoimmune diseases such as psoriasis and multiple sclerosis has shown promise in blocking inflammation linked to age-related macular degeneration.

This eye condition involves the retinal pigment epithelium, a layer of cells that bridges messaging between light receptors in the retina and a network of retinal blood vessels.

Research has implicated an inflammatory protein called tumor necrosis factor-alpha, or TNF-alpha, in this disease, along with dysfunctional mitochondria, which package energy for cells.

Discovering how inflammation and mitochondrial dysfunction interact in age-related macular degeneration could open the door to potential treatments. Macular Degeneration Research grantee **Daisy Yao Shu, PhD**, of the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, went straight to the tissues themselves to find out.

She and her colleagues exposed retinal pigment epithelium to TNF-alpha and tracked how the tissue responded. They found that exposure to the inflammatory protein triggered production of inflammatory molecules in the tissue and affected mitochondrial function.

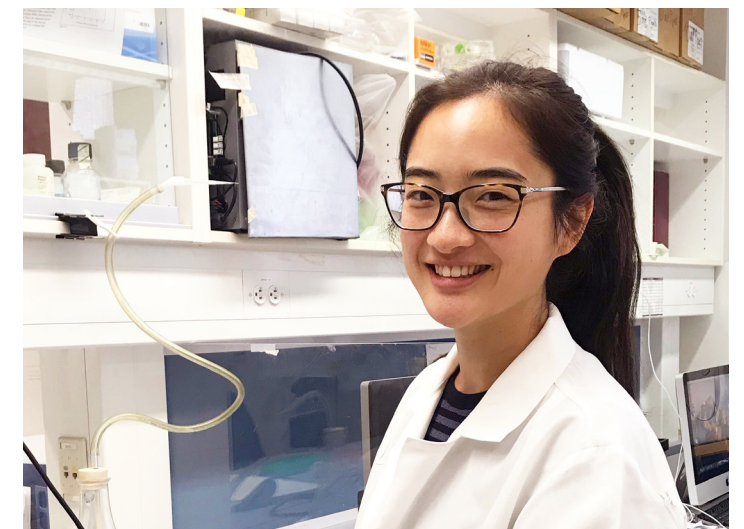
The team also looked close-up at the mitochondria themselves and found them swollen and damaged after the exposure.

Dimethyl fumarate, or DMFu, is a drug that inhibits TNF-alpha. When Dr. Shu and her colleagues pretreated retinal pigment epithelium tissues with DMFu before adding in TNF-alpha, DMFu dampened

the inflammatory response, and the mitochondria remained healthy and intact.

The results point to the exciting possibility that DMFu, a drug already approved for other conditions, could be repurposed as therapy in age-related macular degeneration. Approved drugs have a known safety profile, and how they behave in the body has been thoroughly studied, making their approval for other conditions more straightforward.

Much work remains before DMFu could be used for macular degeneration, however, including laying the groundwork for testing in clinical studies.



**The results point to the exciting possibility that DMFu, a drug already approved for other conditions, could be repurposed as therapy in age-related macular degeneration.**

## Patient Stem Cells Become Pioneering Therapy for Geographic Atrophy

In fall 2022, surgeons at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Clinical Center performed a successful implantation of lab-grown retinal pigmented epithelial cells into a patient with geographic atrophy, an advanced form of dry age-related macular degeneration. The surgery represents the first-ever use of patient-derived stem cells for eye disease.

The stem cell therapy used for this historic transplant is autologous, meaning that it relies on cells taken from and transplanted into the same patient.

Getting to this point began in part with studies funded by Macular Degeneration Research and Alzheimer's Disease Research, which have supported several research projects on adult stem cell-derived retinal pigment epithelium (RPE) transplant therapy. Two of the researchers involved in the groundbreaking operation at NIH are also BrightFocus grantees.

Lead surgeon **Amir Kashani, MD, PhD**, of Johns Hopkins is an Alzheimer's Disease Research grantee who works on new eye-related methods for detecting and tracking vascular dementia. Senior investigator **Kapil Bharti, PhD**, of NIH received a Macular Degeneration Research grant to create a three-dimensional retina using adult stem cell technology.

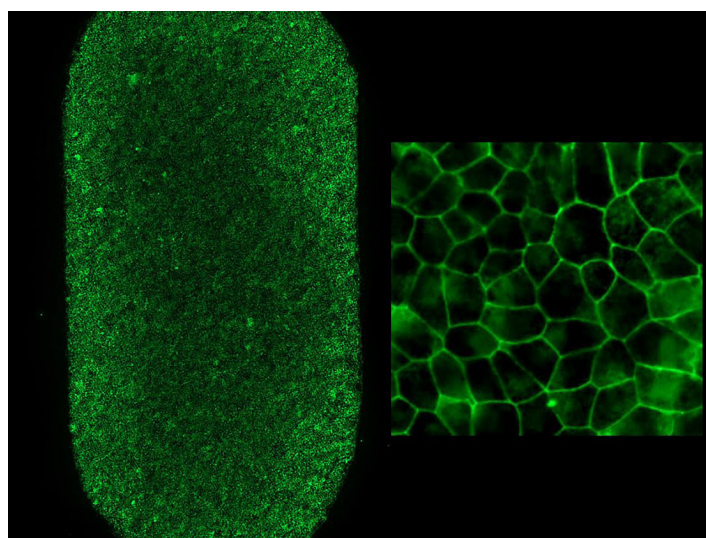
The surgery was the culmination of a decade of research and development at the National Eye Institute and was made possible due to the contributions of numerous research institutions and funders, including BrightFocus, which has supported research projects to study the potential of stem cell derived retinal pigment epithelium replacement therapy.



Dr. Kashani



Dr. Bharti



*The full-RPE patch. Each dot is an RPE cell with the borders stained green. Each patch contains approximately 75,000 RPE cells. Right: Patch RPE cells at higher magnification. Photo courtesy of Kapil Bharti, PhD, NEI.*

## Lab-Grown Light-Responsive Retinal Cells Offer Breakthrough Potential

In a breakthrough that could mean potential new treatments for macular degeneration a Macular Degeneration Research-funded team has created first-of-its-kind lab-grown photoreceptors that can respond to light, just as they do in the eye. The result could be a potential treatment for vision loss.

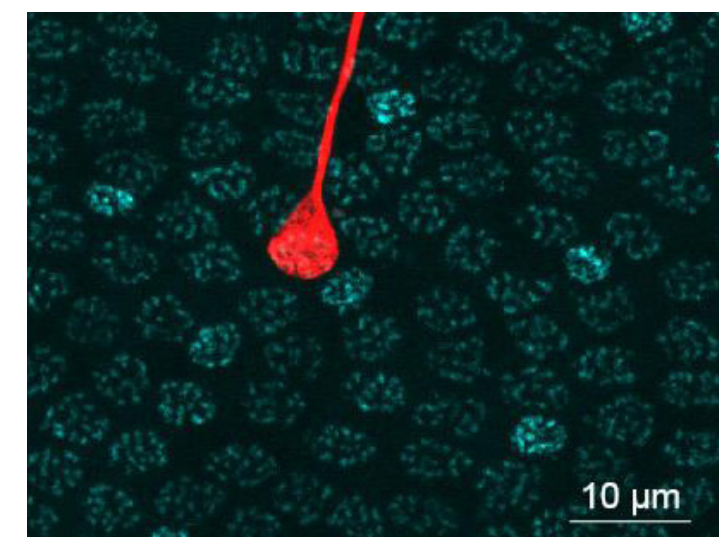
Cone photoreceptors are special cells that provide color vision and are responsible for converting light into signals that are sent to the brain. They are located in an area of the retina called the fovea. Death of the foveal cone cells is the cause of blindness in many diseases, including age-related macular degeneration. This discovery marks a huge step toward someday reversing these losses.

**"By providing the first detailed insight into how the sensors in the fovea work, we can devise treatments for eye diseases that affect the fovea and restore eyesight."**

To create the cells, Macular Degeneration Research grantee **Raunak Sinha, PhD**, professor of neuroscience at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, and his colleagues used cells taken from adult donors.

They chemically rebooted the donated cells as stem cells that could develop into different tissue types. Using targeted conditions, the team succeeded in driving the cells to develop into a rudimentary, three-dimensional patch of retinal tissue known as a retinal organoid.

The breakthrough signals the advent of a potential treatment for vision loss if the system can someday be used to replace damaged tissue. It also marks the creation of an important new tool for studying age-related macular degeneration.



*Cone photoreceptors (in red) are responsible for high-definition central vision, the kind lost in macular degeneration (photo courtesy of Mrinalini Hoon, PhD & Raunak Sinha, PhD, University of Wisconsin-Madison).*



Dr. Sinha

“Research is the answer to finding new treatments and a cure for glaucoma and gives me hope for a brighter future.”

**Florence “Flip” McDonald**  
Diagnosed with  
glaucoma at age 42, now 100



## Uncovering the Root Causes of Glaucoma

We are one of the world’s premier nonprofit funders of research on glaucoma, the leading cause of blindness in the U.S. and worldwide.

National Glaucoma Research has invested nearly \$50 million to date in scientific grants exploring root causes, prevention strategies, and treatments for glaucoma, a group of eye diseases that can damage the optic nerve and result in vision loss and blindness.

National Glaucoma Research—funded scientists are advancing new and innovative ways of detecting, preventing, and curing this “sneak thief of sight” impacting 80 million people worldwide. **Read about a few recent scientific breakthroughs made possible through generous donor support.**

## Protective Implant Shows Promise in Glaucoma, New Trial Enrolling



Dr. Goldberg

An experimental eye implant for glaucoma has done so well in its first formal trial outing that enrollment for the next trial phase has begun, funded in part by National Glaucoma Research.

The implant releases a growth factor, ciliary neurotrophic factor, that protects the optic nerve against glaucoma-related damage.

In glaucoma, pressure from fluid buildup destroys the retinal ganglion cells, which receive visual information and transfer it via the optic nerve to the brain. The growth factor, dubbed NT-501 in clinical trials, already has been tested in studies for other eye diseases.

In the trial, 11 people with the condition were implanted in one eye with a tiny package of cells that produce the growth factor. Their other eye served as control.

In this trial, intended to flag any safety issues, researchers detected no serious side effects, and none of the participants needed the implant removed. During the 18-month trial, eyes with the implant improved compared with the control eyes.

This finding led researchers to move NT-501 into the next testing stage, a midstage trial with more participants. In this currently enrolling trial, investigators will further assess safety and evaluate the effects of having one versus two implants in an eye.

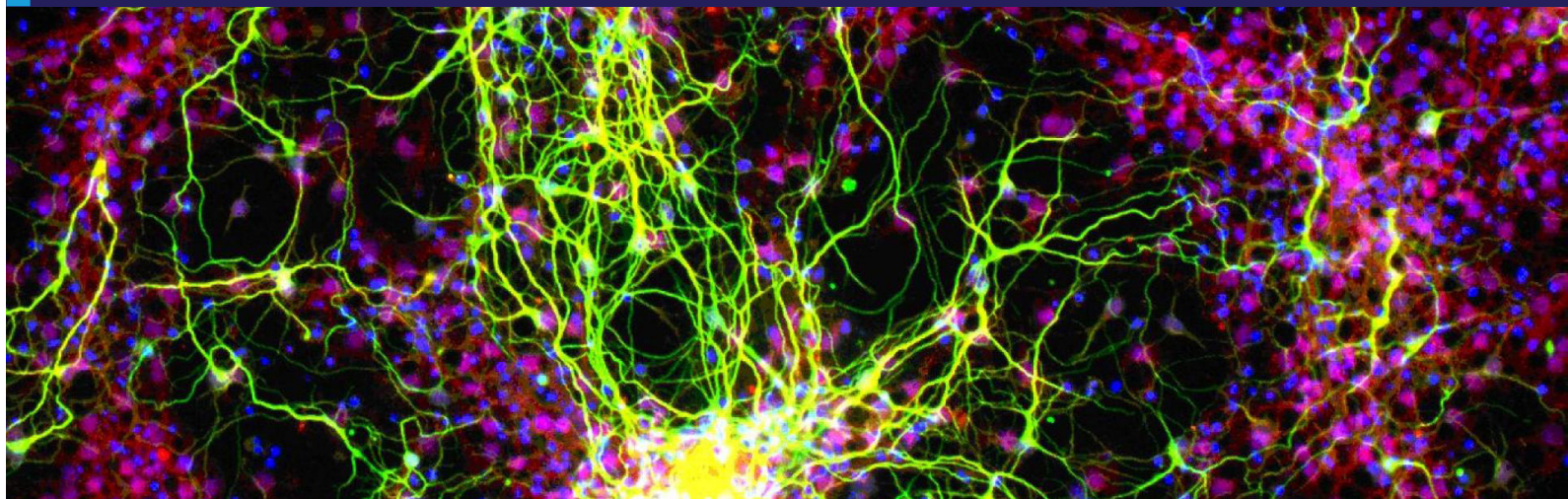
The primary investigator in these studies is National Glaucoma Research grantee **Jeffrey Goldberg, MD, PhD**, professor and chair of ophthalmology at the Byers Eye Institute at Stanford University. His team is looking at two possible outcomes in these studies—neuroprotection, or preserving existing vision in glaucoma, and neuroenhancement, which is actually improving vision.

Dr. Goldberg’s research over the past two decades has focused on understanding retinal ganglion cells degeneration and failure to regenerate and discovering the molecules and treatments that can successfully intervene.

In the clinic, he’s focused on moving promising therapies from the lab into human trials that have a chance of benefiting patients.

“Maintaining vision in glaucoma is too often not achieved with current approaches that focus on lowering eye pressure,” he said. “Whether using eye drops, lasers, or even surgeries, in some patients the vision or visual field continues to get worse. We need new approaches that directly treat the retinal ganglion cells and/or the optic nerve.”

**Dr. Goldberg’s team is looking at two possible outcomes in these studies—neuroprotection, or preserving existing vision in glaucoma, and neuroenhancement, which is actually improving vision.**



## Hundreds of Glaucoma-Linked DNA Regions Identified in AI-Based Study

New research with a foundation in artificial intelligence (AI) has uncovered several hundred gene candidates that may be potential targets for glaucoma drug development.

Researchers conducted an extensive analysis of data from multiple genetic data banks to identify DNA regions, or genetic loci, linked to glaucoma.

Their analysis included data for thousands of eye exam images that had been evaluated using AI. This work is the first to incorporate AI approaches to investigate the genetic basis of glaucoma.

Some of the 312 genetic loci pinpointed in the study are associated with neuroprotection. Although pressure from fluid buildup causes much of the optic nerve and other damage in glaucoma, factors independent of this pressure are involved, too.

But no treatments have been developed for damage unrelated to fluid pressure, and preventive or protective therapies remain elusive. Neuroprotective gene candidates offer hope that this situation may change.

In addition to AI, the research relied on an approach called multiomics, which involves analysis of huge

gene sequence datasets, along with other large datasets that capture how the genes are used, yielding a multilayered picture of their role in disease.

This approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of how molecular changes in the body are linked to disease.

**The findings “could rapidly advance effective treatment to finally prevent retina and optic nerve damage.”**

The findings “could rapidly advance effective treatment to finally prevent retina and optic nerve damage,” said National Glaucoma Research grantee **Stuart MacGregor, PhD**, lead researcher for the study.

National Glaucoma Research grantee **Puya Gharahkhani, PhD**, who also was involved in the work, expects to incorporate the strongest candidates as part of a genetic risk assessment panel. Both researchers are affiliated with the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Berghofer in Brisbane, Australia.

## Support Cells in the Eye May Offer New Paths to Glaucoma Treatments



Dr. Meyer

The pressure from fluid buildup in glaucoma directly affects retinal ganglion cells, which are neurons that bridge the eye and the brain.

But research also shows that a supporting cast of star-shaped cells called astrocytes also harm these cells if they bear a specific glaucoma-linked mutation.

National Glaucoma Research grantees **Jason Meyer, PhD**, and **Cátia Gomes, PhD**, of Indiana University School of Medicine uncovered this role for astrocytes in glaucoma.

They guided adult-derived stem cells into becoming astrocytes and showed that astrocytes bearing the mutation functioned in ways that harmed the retinal ganglion cells. In contrast, astrocytes without this mutation could repair some of the damage of glaucoma.

The usual role of astrocytes is to “feed” and support neurons. If these support cells malfunction, then the neurons they support may be harmed.

Many glaucoma-related studies home in on nerve cells that sustain damage from fluid-

**“We can now start addressing some of these problems, not just by one approach, but by multiple approaches,” Dr. Meyer noted, “and hopefully get to therapeutics or cures a lot faster.”**

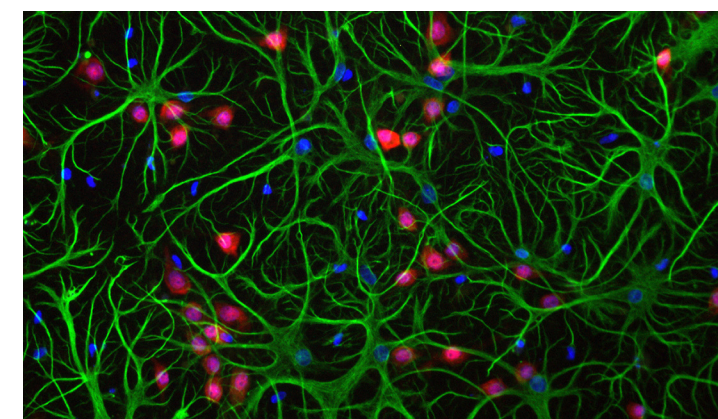
buildup pressure. But relieving this pressure won’t necessarily stop progression of the disease, and some eyes with normal pressure will nonetheless develop glaucoma. These irregularities hinting at factors beyond fluid pressure in glaucoma drew researchers’ attention to astrocytes.

Their findings, which were derived from cells created in a dish, offer a tool for exploring astrocytes’ role in detail.

“When we turn these donated cells into stem cells, they become a very powerful model for us to study the disease in a dish,” said Dr. Meyer. “We look at the cells in close detail—long before a patient would develop symptoms—and ask, ‘What’s leading to those early changes?’”

Identifying a mutation in astrocytes that contributes to glaucoma-related damage offers a target for drug development beyond the retinal ganglion cells themselves.

“We can now start addressing some of these problems, not just by one approach, but by multiple approaches,” Dr. Meyer noted, “and hopefully get to therapeutics or cures a lot faster.”



*Astrocytes (shown in green) play a vital role in the maintenance of retinal ganglion cells, with these interactions adversely affected in glaucoma.*

# Expanding Impact Across the Globe

Age-related brain and vision diseases have no borders, and neither does our work. With partnerships around the world spanning government, nonprofit, and corporate partners, we are fostering cross-border collaborations to unlock

future discoveries and deepen collective expertise. Twenty percent of this year's grants were awarded to scientists at leading institutions outside the U.S. in 16 countries.

In 2023, BrightFocus lent its support to a five-year research initiative by the Canadian Institute of Health that will study the aging brain and identify how to reduce the risks of dementia and other forms of cognitive impairment.

- Active grants
- Grants previously funded

## BrightFocus Research Grants by Country

Through a unique cross-border scientific collaboration supported by BrightFocus, researchers at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel and Imperial College of London in England will team up to better understand biomarkers that can predict Alzheimer's disease risk.

BrightFocus partners with leading European research institutes to advance research and increase public awareness of Alzheimer's disease. BrightFocus helped established international funding partners in the Netherlands (1993), Germany (1995), Belgium (1995), and France (2005) to broaden philanthropic support for Alzheimer's research. Pictured on left are representatives of these research organizations with President and CEO Stacy Pagos Haller.



BrightFocus 2023 Grants at a Glance

(as of July 18, 2023)



2023 Research Grants

■ Alzheimer’s Disease Research

Do Tau Deposits Affect Blood Oxygen Supply to the Brain?

Sung Ji Ahn, PhD  
Weill Cornell Medicine

Visualizing How Amyloid-Beta Strands Interact in Alzheimer’s Disease

David Boyer, PhD  
University of California, Los Angeles

Imaging Markers of Blood Clotting in the Alzheimer’s Disease Brain

Marta Casquero-Veiga, PhD  
Jiménez Díaz Foundation Health Research Institute (Spain)

Novel Molecules to Tackle Toxic Amyloid-Beta Production in Alzheimer’s

Lucía Chávez-Gutiérrez, PhD  
Flanders Institute for Biotechnology (Belgium)

Spreading of Harmful Proteins by Support Cells in Alzheimer’s Disease

Olga Chechneva, PhD  
Shriners Hospitals for Children - Northern California

Disrupted Sleep Cycles and Alzheimer’s Disease Risk

Jingyuan Chen, PhD  
Massachusetts General Hospital (Mass General)

Does the Little-Studied Big Tau Protect Against Alzheimer’s Disease?

Daheun Chung, PhD  
Baylor College of Medicine

Disrupted Nuclear Protein Trafficking in Frontotemporal Dementia

Alyssa Coyne, PhD  
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Understanding How Newly Approved Anti-Amyloid Drugs Affect Blood Vessels

Kate Emily Foley, PhD  
University of Indiana School of Medicine

Tracking Immune Cells in Alzheimer’s Disease Brains

David Gate, PhD  
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

Identifying Brain-Wide Network Disruptions That Underlie Alzheimer’s Disease

Ariel Gilad, PhD  
Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel)

Imaging the Rescue of Memory in Alzheimer’s Disease Mice

Matthew Isaacson, PhD  
Cornell University

A Newly Discovered Version of Toxic Tau as a Therapeutic Target in Alzheimer’s Disease

Daniel C. Lee, PhD  
University of Kentucky Research Foundation

Exploring the Origins of Tau Pathology in the Human Brainstem Locus Ceruleus

Meaghan Morris, MD, PhD  
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Characterizing the Range of Tau Forms Linked to Different Brain Diseases

Henry Pan, PhD  
University of California, San Francisco

The Role of the Basal Forebrain in Early Detection of Alzheimer’s Disease

Joost Michiel Riphagen, MD, PhD  
Massachusetts General Hospital (Mass General)

Targeting Brain Immune Cells as a Novel Therapeutic in Alzheimer’s Disease

Carla Rothlin, PhD  
Yale University  
Co-Principal Investigator: Sourav Ghosh, PhD

Preclinical Testing of a CRISPR-Based Alzheimer’s Gene Therapy

Subhojit Roy, MD, PhD  
University of California, San Diego

Testing Candidate Therapies Targeting Dysfunction of Support Cells in Alzheimer’s Disease

Maria Virtudes Sanchez Mico, PhD  
Massachusetts General Hospital (Mass General)

Unfolding Alzheimer’s Tau Therapies: Near- and Long-Term Approaches

Paul Seidler  
University of Southern California  
Co-Principal Investigator: Daryl Davies, PhD

The Role of White Matter Injury in Alzheimer’s Disease

Zahra Shirzadi, PhD  
Massachusetts General Hospital (Mass General)

Pinning Down How Alzheimer’s Risk Gene BIN1 Controls Brain Immune Responses

Ari Sudwarts, PhD  
University of South Florida

Identifying Therapeutic Targets to Prevent Amyloid Accumulation

Arun Upadhyay, PhD  
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

Following the Spread of Iron Through the Brain in Alzheimer’s Disease

Louise Van der Weerd, PhD  
Leiden University Medical Center (Netherlands)  
Co-Principal Investigator: Boyd Kenkhuis, PhD

Testing a Mitochondria-Targeting Compound in Alzheimer’s Disease

Qi Wang, PhD  
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (Switzerland)

How the Brain’s Support Cells Interact with and Contribute to Alzheimer’s Disease

Till Zimmer, PhD  
Weill Cornell Medicine

*In addition to the grants above that were recommended by our Scientific Review Committee, Alzheimer’s Disease Research awarded eight grants to support other ongoing scientific efforts including the continuation and expansion of the International Down Syndrome Biobank Consortium, exploring interventions like yoga and meditation, strengthening international research collaborations, and funding training opportunities for early-career investigators.*

# 2023 Grant Awards

## ■ Macular Degeneration Research

- The Role of Mitochondrial Dysfunction in Age-Related Macular Degeneration**  
Navdeep Gogna, PhD  
The Jackson Laboratory
- Getting to the Root of Fat Transport Dysfunction in Age-Related Macular Degeneration**  
Catharina Grubaugh, PhD  
University of Pennsylvania
- Imaging Tiny Blood Vessels in the Eye for Markers of Age-Related Macular Degeneration**  
Yali Jia, PhD  
Oregon Health & Science University
- What Squirrels Can Teach Us About Treating Age-Related Macular Degeneration**  
Sangeetha Kandoi, PhD  
University of California, San Francisco
- Uncovering Immune-Related Factors Driving Retinal Pigment Epithelium Repair**  
Lyndsay Leach, PhD  
The University of Texas at Austin
- Interactions of Immune Proteins and Glucose Breakdown in Severe, Hereditary Age-Related Macular Degeneration**  
Rayne Lim, PhD  
University of Washington
- Tracking How Rare Eye Immune Cells Respond to Damage in Age-Related Macular Degeneration**  
Abdelilah Majdoubi, PhD  
Yale University
- How Age-Related Macular Degeneration Risk Factors Interact in Disease Development**  
Freya Mowat, PhD  
University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Identifying Signals That Draw Immune Cells to Damaged Tissues in Age-Related Macular Degeneration**  
Kelly Mulfaul, PhD  
University of Iowa

- Stem Cell Therapy for Early Age-Related Macular Degeneration**  
Narendra Pandala, PhD  
University of Iowa
- Immune Cell Traps in Inflammation and Wet Age-Related Macular Degeneration**  
Matthew Rutar, PhD  
University of Canberra (Australia)
- The Potential Role of the Cell’s Sugar Coat in Age-Related Macular Degeneration**  
Jaclyn Swan, PhD  
University of California, San Diego Health Sciences
- A Newly Discovered Eye Immune Environment in Age-Related Macular Degeneration**  
James Walsh, MD, PhD  
Washington University in St. Louis
- In addition to the grants above that were recommended by our Scientific Review Committee, Macular Degeneration Research awarded five grants to support ongoing scientific efforts, including providing travel fellowships for early-career investigators from underrepresented groups to share their work with the world at scientific conferences.*
- National Glaucoma Research**
- Boosting Neuronal Energy to Improve Vision in Glaucoma**  
Adriana Di Polo, PhD  
University of Montreal Hospital Center (Canada)
- Defining the Role of a New Protein Target in Fluid Buildup in Glaucoma**  
Rupalatha Maddala, PhD  
Duke University School of Medicine  
Co-Principal Investigators: Pratap Challa, MD and Vasantha Rao, PhD
- An Effective Tool for Understanding Dysfunctional Eye Drainage in Glaucoma**  
Weiming Mao, PhD  
Indiana University

- An Optimal Form of Nerve Growth Factor as a New Neuroprotective Drug for Glaucoma**  
Silvia Marinelli, PhD  
European Brain Research Institute (Italy)  
Co-Principal Investigator: Francesca Malerba, PhD
- Targeting Eye Immune Cells to Prevent Glaucoma-Induced Nerve Damage**  
Shubham Maurya, PhD  
University of California, Berkeley
- Repurposing an Approved Diabetes Drug for Glaucoma**  
Kazuya Oikawa, PhD, BVSc  
University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Building a Better Model to Screen for Intraocular Pressure-Lowering Glaucoma Drugs**  
Darryl Overby, PhD  
Imperial College London (UK)
- Using Laser Pulses to Smooth the Way for Transplanted Retinal Ganglion Cells in Glaucoma**  
Karen Peynshaert, PhD  
Ghent University (Belgium)
- Long-Lasting, Nonsurgical Treatment for Eye Pressure in Glaucoma**  
Mark Prausnitz, PhD  
Georgia Institute of Technology
- Mapping the Pathways of Neurodegeneration in Glaucoma Using Artificial Intelligence**  
Karthik Shekhar, PhD  
University of California, Berkeley  
*Recipient of the Dr. Douglas H. Johnson Award for Glaucoma Research.*
- Harnessing Artificial Intelligence to Improve Glaucoma Clinical Trials**  
Jithin Yohannan, MD  
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
- In addition to the grants above that were recommended by our Scientific Review Committee, National Glaucoma Research awarded two grants to support ongoing scientific efforts, including providing travel fellowships for early-career investigators from underrepresented groups to share their work with the world at scientific conferences.*
- All grants will be awarded pending conclusion of contract negotiations. Co-principal investigator institutions are listed if different from that of the principal investigator.*

## Special Thanks to Donors Supporting Ongoing Awards

- Alzheimer’s Disease Research**
- Revealing Early Biomarkers in Alzheimer’s Disease**  
Uri Ashery, PhD  
Tel Aviv University (Israel)  
Co-Principal Investigator: Shahar Alon, PhD, Bar-Ilan University (Israel)  
*This award is made possible with the support of the Luminescence Foundation.*
- Impact of Midlife Subclinical Cardiovascular Disease on Alzheimer’s**  
Marta Cortes-Canteli, PhD  
Spanish National Centre for Cardiovascular Research (Spain)  
Co-Principal Investigators: Valentine Fuster, PhD & Juan Domingo Gispert, PhD  
*This award is made possible in part by the support from the Sephardic Foundation on Aging.*
- Liquid Biopsy for Detection of Cell Death in Alzheimer’s Disease Based on cfDNA Methylation Patterns**  
Yuval Dor, PhD  
Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel)  
*This award is made possible in part by the support from the Sephardic Foundation on Aging.*
- Macular Degeneration Research**
- Does Aberrant Mechanotransduction Trigger RPE Atrophy in Age-Related Macular Degeneration?**  
Aparna Lakkaraju, PhD  
University of California, San Francisco  
*Recipient of the Lorraine Maresca Award.*

World-Class Scientific Review Committees  
Accelerate Research Impact

Composed of renowned leaders in their fields, our Scientific Review Committees recommend new research opportunities for BrightFocus to advance its goal of defeating Alzheimer’s, macular degeneration, and glaucoma. The following experts have served on each committee within the preceding five years:

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Florian Sennlaub, MD, PhD INSTITUT DE LA VISION (FRANCE)

Lois Smith, MD, PhD BOSTON CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL

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Darrell WuDunn, MD, PhD UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA JACKSONVILLE

# Community Engagement and Events



## 1 50 Years of Research Impact and Advancements

BrightFocus' 50th Anniversary Celebration and Awards, held June 14, 2023, at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., honored four exemplary scientists and advocates working to end Alzheimer's, macular degeneration, and glaucoma while celebrating the strides made over the last 50 years toward discovering cures for these three diseases.

**Honorees** (pictured, opposite page, top left):  
**Gerard D. Schellenberg, PhD**, University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine Scientific Impact Award

**Mae Gordon, PhD**, and **Michael Kass, MD**, Washington University in St. Louis  
Helen Keller Prize for Vision Research

**Debra Tann**, EdD, Reminiscent Community Impact Award

## 2 Building Trust Through Sustained Community Engagement

In January 2023, BrightFocus partnered with dementia nonprofit Reminiscent to host a free walk-up community health screening fair in Valdosta, Georgia, sponsored in part by AARP. Local volunteers performed memory screenings, vision tests, and blood pressure exams for community members, and attendees received a printout of their results that they could take to their doctor. The event was one of BrightFocus' many grassroots touchpoints designed to build trust, raise awareness, and provide meaningful information and services related to age- and-brain health to underresourced communities and set the stage for sustained and scalable outreach efforts to come.

## 3 Congressional Briefing on Health Equity

As part of our 50th anniversary celebration, we hosted a bipartisan congressional briefing on June 14, *Health Equity Begins in the Lab: Future Breakthroughs in Alzheimer's, Macular Degeneration, and Glaucoma Research Depend on Robust Funding and Clinical Trial Diversity*. A panel of scientists, thought leaders, and advocates joined policymakers to discuss the importance of research funding for these diseases, educational outreach, and increased clinical trial participation by underrepresented groups.

## 4 Expanding Access to Brain and Eye Health Information

This year, BrightFocus launched **Zoom in on Dementia & Alzheimer's**, a free, virtual discussion program where medical experts share the latest research breakthroughs and news from the field. Hosted by BrightFocus' Nancy Lynn, each episode includes a live Q&A where participants can ask their questions directly to the experts. Since the program's launch in April 2023, Zoom in has reached thousands of people from across the country. All previous episodes are available at [brightfocus.org/ADZoom](https://brightfocus.org/ADZoom).

**BrightFocus Chats**, our popular audio series connecting people with vision diseases to doctors and researchers, expanded this year to include glaucoma topics as well as macular degeneration.

Over the last year, more than 65,000 people participated in a Chat. All past episodes are available at [brightfocus.org/chats](https://brightfocus.org/chats).

**Brain Info Live**, a series of multilingual educational programs customized for diverse communities across the U.S., has helped raise awareness about brain health and opportunities to participate in clinical trials. This year, the first episode in Haitian Creole was broadcast live on Haitian Creole radio in south Florida and screened publicly in Haiti.

# Community Engagement and Events

## Health Equity Starts in the Lab

### Unlocking Scientific Discoveries That Work for Everyone

Every population is impacted by Alzheimer’s, macular degeneration, and glaucoma, and they are not impacted equally. These disparities are a public health problem that must be solved to better prevent, treat, and cure mind and sight diseases.

Without considering the unique needs of all populations, tomorrow’s medical milestones may leave millions behind.

BrightFocus’ research portfolio includes the most promising and innovative research that approaches these diseases from a diverse range of angles to have the best chance of defeating them for good.

Our grantees are studying the genetic variants and sex-based differences that increase the risk of Alzheimer’s, risk factors for primary open-angle glaucoma in people of African descent, and how the incidence of Alzheimer’s, macular degeneration, and glaucoma varies by race, ethnicity, gender, and genetic makeup.

Of the Foundation’s **287** actively funded grants, nearly **45%** are led by women and scientists of a non-white racial background.



## Health Disparities



African Americans are **3-4 times more likely** to be diagnosed with glaucoma than white populations.



Glaucoma is a **leading cause of blindness** among African Americans and Hispanics in the U.S.



Women comprise **two-thirds** of all Alzheimer’s patients and are **twice as likely** to develop the disease.



White patients make up **92%** of clinical trial participants.



## Fostering the Next Generation of Innovators

In addition to raising public awareness about Alzheimer’s, macular degeneration, and glaucoma, BrightFocus also educates and trains the next generation of brain and vision scientists through its Fast Track programs. Taught by experts in the field, these programs have accelerated the careers and transformative ideas of thousands of early-career scientists from around the world.

“Attending Alzheimer’s Fast Track was a milestone for me. My interactions with the other participants have already expanded my project and provided me with a unique take on our working hypothesis and methods that we implement. Being part of this program reminds me why I’m in science in the first place: to carry the beacon of knowledge forward for all.”

Atalay Ata, MSc  
MDI Biological Laboratory



## Broadening Access to Science

Scientific conferences are important avenues for scientists to present their research to the wider community, gain valuable advice and mentoring, and spark collaborations on projects, but cost is often a deterrent for many early-career scientists. In 2022, BrightFocus funded 91 travel fellowships to allow scientists from diverse backgrounds to attend conferences to share their research and facilitate global collaboration.

“I connected with numerous researchers who either suggested some interesting ideas to incorporate in our project and/or introduced me to mentors for further discussion and potential collaboration. As a medical student dedicating a year off to glaucoma research, this year has been challenging financially. The travel grant alleviated some of this financial burden, which I deeply appreciate.”

Anna Mueller, Florida International University/  
Bascom Palmer Eye Institute  
Recipient of a 2023 BrightFocus travel grant to attend the annual meeting of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO), the premier gathering for eye and vision scientists.

Our Supporters Make Research Possible

BrightFocus extends its deep appreciation to our donors for their generosity toward our three scientific and public awareness programs: Alzheimer’s Disease Research, Macular Degeneration Research, and National Glaucoma Research. The support of individual donors, family foundations, and corporate partners makes our work possible. A wide range of contribution opportunities is available to

accommodate resources and charitable goals. Each gift is important and needed to help us find a cure for these diseases of mind and sight.

BrightFocus donors often have special connections to the scientific research programs they support. We are honored to share three of these stories with you.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Sharing Hope for Families Affected by Alzheimer’s



**Monica Vierling Hall’s** journey through her father Jerome’s battle with Alzheimer’s disease is an inspiring story of love, compassion, and resilience. Despite his declining cognitive abilities, Monica

was able to maintain a loving relationship with her father by staying present and engaged.

Monica’s desire to make a meaningful impact for other families in the Alzheimer’s community led her to discover Alzheimer’s Disease Research (ADR). After Jerome’s passing six years ago, Monica sought a purposeful way to channel the support that had poured in. The word “research” resonated with her, sparking hope in a realm often overshadowed by fear. She became an annual donor to ADR, inspired by the dedicated researchers who work tirelessly to conquer this mind-robbing disease.

“Knowing about these researchers committing their lives to finding a cure for Alzheimer’s gives me reassurance for the future,” she said.

In 2020, Monica wrote her first book, “Pouf: A True Story About Love, Life, and Alzheimer’s,” which

chronicles the unique beauty she found in her father’s journey. During their regular visits, she was struck by many of the things he said. “He became more artistic with his words, and I wanted to capture them,” she said.

Her notes became the basis of her book, which reflects on the challenges she and many other caregivers face when trying to communicate with a loved one with Alzheimer’s. For her, finding the human connection—what creates a sparkle in the eye—matters more than the words spoken.

“As a caregiver, you take off your shoes of normalcy and walk in their world,” she said.

With her firsthand understanding of the disease’s nuances, Monica hopes her story can be a bridge between the world of caregivers and people with Alzheimer’s. She continues to donate to ADR to invest in a future free from the clutches of Alzheimer’s.

“Alzheimer’s is a fearful word, but research is hopeful,” she said. “I feel good that I’m contributing to that hope and helping to ensure a better future for the next generation.”

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Having Fun While Doing Good

**Barbara Cheatham** doesn’t always sport electric pink hair, but when she does, it’s for a good cause.

Her hair transformation came about through a fundraiser she and some 20 others in the low-vision support group at the Timber Ridge at Talus Life Services Community in Issaquah, Washington, conducted. They raised \$2,700 in support of BrightFocus’ Macular Degeneration Research and National Glaucoma Research programs.

Most members of the low-vision group have macular degeneration or glaucoma.

“I joined the low-vision support group because I wanted to be with fellow sufferers to try to help one another share our feelings about losing our sight,” said Barbara, who has both macular degeneration and glaucoma and has lost nearly all her vision in one eye.

In thinking of ways to raise money for a cause that was meaningful to them, Barbara thought back to something her son told her on her 90th birthday: “Now that you’re 90, don’t be dignified. Stay silly.”

So she came up with the “undignified” idea of holding a raffle where the winners would get to choose the color of her hair. While there were some initial skeptics, “They were overruled,” she said, laughing.

When the fundraising committee, of which Barbara served as chair, discovered the free resources and innovative research funded by Macular Degeneration Research and National Glaucoma Research, they knew that they had found the right fit for their project.

Word of the fundraiser spread quickly around Timber Ridge, and soon there were three volunteers to



Barbara Cheatham (left) and Martha Martin, members of the low-vision support group at Timber Ridge at Talus Life Services Community in Issaquah, Washington.

dye their hair—Barbara, resident Martha Martin, and Heather Turner, the executive director of Timber Ridge. Members of the low-vision group sold raffle tickets in the lobby, which gave committee members an opportunity to share information about their support group with other residents who opened up about their own vision challenges.

Raffle winners were notified with a knock on their apartment door and balloons before they were asked to choose their desired hair color for the volunteers. A group of amused residents watched the transformation take place at the beauty salon—Barbara and Heather’s hair to pink, Martha’s hair to green.

While the temporary hair dye has worn off, Barbara’s enthusiasm for fundraising hasn’t. She’s already thinking of the next fundraising project for the low-vision group to take on.

“I was excited about the idea that, as a group, we weren’t just insular, talking about our own problems, but that we could make lemonade out of lemons. We could do something that would have broader significance—not just go about our own problems,” she said. “We had so much fun with it.”

Our Donors

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

A Life of Generosity

Meet **Florence McDonald**, a woman whose life has been nothing short of extraordinary. A retired naval officer, Florence, affectionately known as Flip, has dedicated herself to helping others, making a positive impact on countless lives along the way.

In 1963, after serving as a commander in the U.S. Navy, Flip embarked on a new chapter of her life as a civilian. It was during her annual physical at the age of 42 that she received the life-changing news – she had glaucoma. This early diagnosis allowed her to maintain her vision for a significant period, but as the years passed, the pressure in her left eye could not be reduced to a healthy level and she gradually lost vision in one eye.

Over the next 50 years, Flip faced the challenges of glaucoma head-on. Daily eye drops, laser treatments, and multiple surgeries became part of her routine. Despite her struggles, she remained resilient, never letting her condition dampen her spirits or deter her from helping others. In 2021, Flip faced a new challenge, losing her sight completely in one eye and having only a small amount of vision left in the other. However, she refused to be disheartened and found hope in the advancements being made in glaucoma research.

Now, at 100 years old, Flip is legally blind but remains determined to make a difference. Her commitment to discovering a cure for glaucoma led her to become a dedicated supporter of National Glaucoma Research for over two decades, supporting research that she believes holds the key to finding a cure and providing hope for a better future. And in 2022, Flip became a member of BrightFocus Foundation’s prestigious de la Cuesta Legacy Society by establishing a planned gift to ensure her legacy of support for National Glaucoma Research lives on for generations to come.



“Research is the answer to finding more treatments and a cure for glaucoma. If I can in any way help somebody else avoid what happened to me, I certainly wanted to be able to do that,” she said.

Flip’s passion for funding innovative research is fueled by her desire to spare others from experiencing the challenges she has faced. Because glaucoma often has no early symptoms, she encourages everyone to get their eyes checked regularly through a comprehensive, dilated eye exam.

“Research is the answer to finding more treatments and a cure for glaucoma. If I can in any way help somebody else avoid what happened to me, I certainly wanted to be able to do that.”

Partnerships

Our Valued Partners

BrightFocus works closely with nonprofit and corporate partners on issues of common concern.

Global Alzheimer’s Collaborations Foster Scientific Growth

BrightFocus has worked with partners worldwide to advance research and raise public awareness of Alzheimer’s disease:



**BELGIUM**  
Stichting Alzheimer Onderzoek



**GERMANY**  
Alzheimer Forschung Initiative e.V.



**FRANCE**  
Fondation Vaincre Alzheimer



**THE NETHERLANDS**  
Alzheimer Nederland

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# Financial Highlights

BrightFocus is a nonprofit organization designated under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions to BrightFocus and its programs are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. The Foundation is supported entirely by voluntary private contributions.

BrightFocus received in-kind donations to expand public health information outreach and these are included in Program Services expenses. This allowed the organization to reach millions of people with information about risk factors, treatments, and caregiving.

## BRIGHTFOCUS FOUNDATION AND SUBSIDIARIES

### CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION 2023

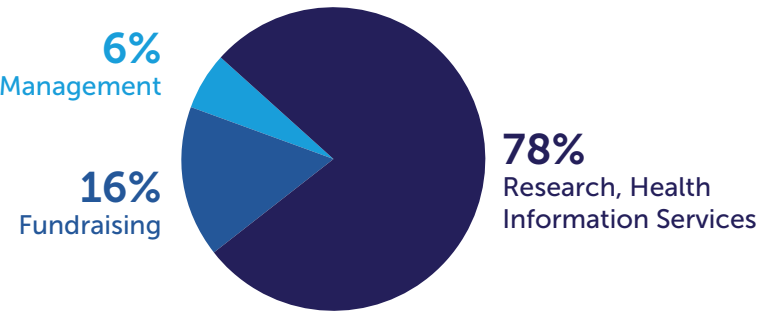
As of March 31, 2023 (in thousands of dollars)

| ASSETS                                    |          |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|
| Cash and Investments                      | \$43,637 |
| Charitable Trusts and Bequests Receivable | 5,539    |
| Rental Property                           | 3,636    |
| Fixed Assets, Net                         | 4,493    |
| Other Assets                              | 1322     |
| TOTAL ASSETS                              | \$58,626 |
| LIABILITIES                               |          |
| Accounts Payable and Other Liabilities    | \$1360   |
| Grants Payable                            | 33,120   |
| Charitable Gift Annuities                 | 585      |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES                         | 35,065   |
| NET ASSETS                                |          |
| Without Donor Restriction                 | 10,360   |
| With Donor Restriction                    | 13,201   |
| TOTAL NET ASSETS                          | 23,562   |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS          | \$58,626 |

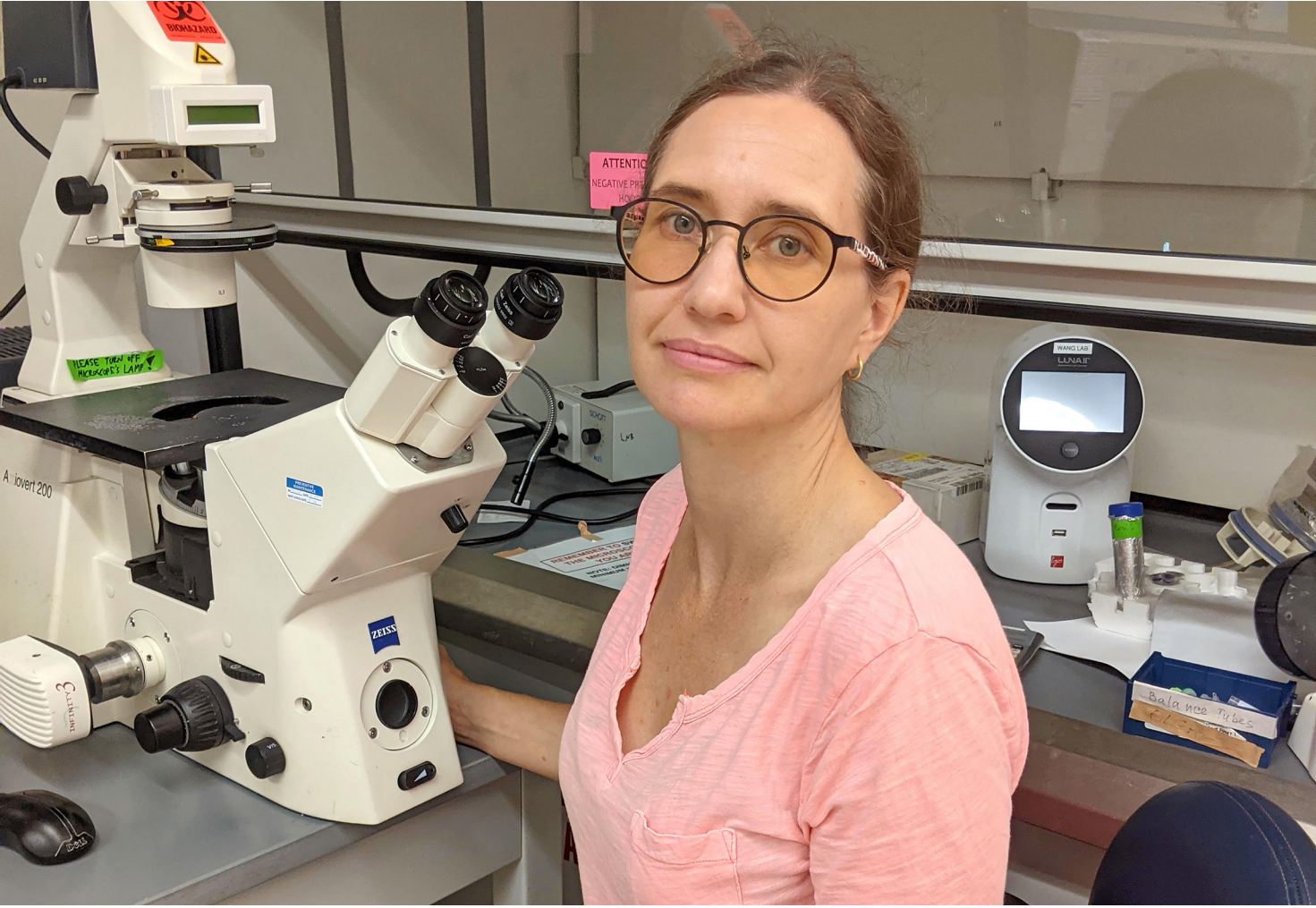
### CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES For the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2023

(in thousands of dollars)

| SUPPORT AND REVENUE         |           |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Contributions and Grants    | \$36,497  |
| Bequests                    | 6,712     |
| Donated Services            | 25,309    |
| Investment Income           | (2,735)   |
| Rental & Other Income       | 2,050     |
| TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE   | 67,833    |
| EXPENSES                    |           |
| Program Services            |           |
| Research                    | 19,471    |
| Health Information Services | 38,005    |
| Total Program Services      | 57,476    |
| Supporting Services         |           |
| Fundraising                 | 11,445    |
| Management and General      | 4,370     |
| Total Supporting Services   | 15,815    |
| TOTAL EXPENSES              | 73,291    |
| CHANGE IN NET ASSETS        | (\$5,458) |



A complete copy of financial statements audited by Marcum, LLP, is available upon request from BrightFocus Foundation, 22512 Gateway Center Drive, Clarksburg, MD, 20871, or at [www.brightfocus.org](http://www.brightfocus.org).



“Every day, I am energized by the joy of discovering new things and the hope that our efforts will lead to a future where we can improve the lives of those affected by neurological disorders. With your support, we can transform the field, bringing us closer to effective treatments and a brighter future for individuals and families impacted by these debilitating conditions.”

Olga Chechneva, Alzheimer’s Disease Research grantee

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