

**Sight Loss Services, Inc.
Cape Cod and Islands
“The CandleLight” Newsletter
December 2015**

**“Yesterday's the past, tomorrow's the future, but
today is a gift.**

That's why it's called the present.”

- Bill Keane

(with thanks to Fran M for suggesting the quote!)

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Winter

**With last winter being so memorably bad,
here is a reminder of our snow policy: If
school is cancelled in Dennis-Yarmouth then
the office of Sight Loss Services will also be
closed that day. Scheduled support groups
will be contacted if cancelled.**

Amerson Community Lending Library

**Our summer reading suggestions featured a
couple of books available here at the South
Dennis office of Sight Loss Services. With
winter upon us how about revisiting two**

classics from our office library. “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens. The many feature films made of this story are televised every winter but there is nothing like going back to revisit the original! And if Dickens is too cozy for you we also have a large print copy of Ernest Hemingways’ classic tale “The Old Man and the Sea”.

Cataract News

A revolutionary way of treating cataracts is being jointly researched by three U.S. universities. U.C. San Francisco, University of Michigan, and Washington University (Saint Louis) are researching a chemical that could potentially be used in eye drops that would dissolve cataracts without the need for surgery. Animal studies on the compound have begun and it has also been tested on human lenses which had been previously removed during cataract surgery. Results were promising and a company called ViewPoint Therapeutics has been formed by 2 of the research scientists (Jason Gestwicki, and Leah Makley) to develop the compound for future human use.

They hope to begin human clinical trials within the next 2 years.

Ophthalmology / Optometry - Nov 12, 2015 Edition: www.news-medical.net

A Healthier New Year

Losing vision is a challenge in and of itself – but be aware that it can also make you more vulnerable to other conditions as well.

At a recent meeting of the Blinded Veterans of Cape Cod, John Pimental from the Providence VA office spoke about the possible links between blindness and the onset of Alzheimer’s disease. He talked about 4 factors to be aware of to be healthier.

The first is nutrition – those with vision loss are actually ahead of the curve on that, as the antioxidants that prevent Alzheimer’s also retard Macular Degeneration, and many are already making good diet choices for their sight. Oxidation is like ‘rust’ on the connections in the brain, and ANTI-oxidants help guard against that.

The second is exercise – even simple things like walking become exponentially more difficult as vision loss becomes worse. For the health of the brain as well as the heart, the vision impaired must make that effort,

be it through chair exercise, light weight lifting, swimming, or even Nautilus machines if there is access to a gym.

The third is socialization – the increased difficulty of getting out and about, and the reluctance to make new acquaintances is hard for those with vision loss. It becomes easier to rely on long distance relationships by phone or emails, when what the brain craves is the immediate and ever changing stimulus of fact to face interaction.

That brought up what he called the Novelty Response – the brain decays unless new and different data and routines are available. Yet those with vision loss deliberately try to set up routines, living spaces, etc. to MINIMIZE any difference or novelty to make life easier. The brain is hard wired to react to the new and different in a way that stimulates and enervates the brain. He suggested that if you enjoy puzzles and have become too good at crosswords, try Sudoku or another type of puzzle to keep the response fresh and avoid letting the brain become too comfortable and accustomed to anything.

This is a complication in life, but even being aware of not challenging yourself and trying

to adapt is a good form of brain exercise in itself.

All About Eyeglasses

What do those abbreviations and numbers on the prescription mean? Why do my friend and I have the same prescription numbers, when my vision is so much worse? What does 20/20 mean? If my best vision without glasses is 20/200, am I legally blind? Should I wear tinted lenses? How do I know what kinds of sunglasses are best? These questions are answered in a new video available online, “All About Eyeglasses”. The video may be accessed at Prevent Blindness.org. Accompanying the video are four downloadable eye tests for self-monitoring between regular exams: a Snellen acuity chart plus tests for tracking visual field, contrast sensitivity, and the potential for inflammation leading to wet macular degeneration. These tests are not intended to replace regular exams, but they are useful alongside the traditional Amsler grid for monitoring visual changes and describing symptoms to others.

<http://lowvision.preventblindness.org/eye-conditions/all-about-eyeglasses>

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