



新聞稿 PRESS RELEASE

PRESS STATEMENT

by

The Eye Unit

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"Blindness from retinal (macular) degeneration, for the first time in Hong Kong, is treatable by eye surgery"

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness in people above 60 years of age affecting 5-15% of people in this age group in the western countries.

The cause of this eye disease is not known but there are suggestions that AMD is associated with aging changes, race, skin complexion, exposure to ultraviolet light, hypertension and cardiovascular disease, nutritional factors, cigarette smoking and family history.

AMD affects the central part of the retina (the light sensitive part of the eyeball, equivalent to the film of a camera) called the macula which is responsible for our fine visual acuity, reading vision and colour vision. In the early stages of AMD, although morphological changes could be observable by eye examination, the patient could have perfect vision and the eye appears absolutely normal. No treatment is known to stop or revert the progression of AMD.

In the active stage of AMD, fluid leaking from blood vessels around the macular area causes distortion of vision and blurriness of the central vision. Some of these eyes could be treated with the laser but the majority of such cases went on to bleeding into the macular area resulting in severe loss of central vision.

Finally, a dense scar is formed in the macular area and the patient's central vision is damaged permanently.

Eye doctors at the Chinese University of Hong Kong have successfully performed microsurgery to remove the macular scars from underneath the retina in ten patients in the last four months. This achievement represents the first time in Hong Kong that eye patients with the terminal stages of AMD could recover some central vision. We believe this also to be the largest collection of experience in this innovative eye surgery in South East Asia.

The first submacular surgery in the eye dated back to 1991 in the USA and since then more than 100 patients with AMD had undergone this surgery in the world but mostly in the USA.

The operation involves first excising the vitreous gel (the jelly inside the eye) under the operating microscope and making a small incision in the retina just outside of the macular area next to the scar tissue. Through this incision, delicate specially designed instruments were insinuated underneath the retina to dissect off the scar, which is then grasped with microforceps and extracted through the retinal incision into the vitreous cavity and then outside of the eye. The incision on the retina was then sealed with laser and tamponaded with a large gas bubble.

The ten Hong Kong patients were all Chinese above 65 years of age. Three patients had the operation performed over two months ago and the rest are recovering from the surgery. The vision regained after the operation depends largely on the size of the scar, the extensiveness of the disease and the duration and severity of the disease.

With the success of this operation, we have entered a new era of eye surgery in Hong Kong. First, this offers a solution to hundreds of patients with the terminal stages of AMD and which had no known treatment before. Second, we at the Prince of Wales Hospital, are now able to provide, for the first time in Hong Kong, a full spectrum of surgical options in the management of patients with AMD. Third, we have put Hong Kong amongst the few leading centres in the world which are capable of performing a successful submacular surgery.

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Attachments: Photos and Illustration of the Submacular Surgery