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all day, brighter skies following with a few showers. But crucially it will start to feel a bit more like spring with those temperatures on the rise. It is age: 46. People with a rare disorder that would have made them go blind have had their vision improved by a cutting edge genetic therapy. Researchers were investigating a condition called **choroideremia**. It affects young men whose light-detecting cells in the backs of their eyes are dying because they have inherited a faulty gene. To stop more cells dying, doctors inject working copies of the gene into the eye. The treatment also revitalises some of the dying cells and can make the patient's sight better. The clinical study has shown the improvement is long-lasting. With us is Joe Pepper, who has the condition and has been treated at the John Radcliffe Hospital. Good morning. Good morning. And Robert MacLaren is a Professor of Ophthalmology

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at the University of Oxford. He led the trial and operated on Joe. Thank you very much for joining us. Joe, let's start with you. You had the procedure six months ago, the treatment. Before that, as sitting here, what could you see of me? I could see your features, but in terms of the definition, the clarity, I would say it is a bit like seeing things in HD, the shades, the colours, looking at your ear lobes, the definition of those, that is far beyond what I could see six months ago. Night-vision was an issue? It is the primary issue, in terms of mobility. Now, the sensory of the light in both eyes is almost exactly the same. I think you describe just the business of shaking hands. I was mindful of the 21st came in, I held my hand out. Not long ago, that was a real

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problem for you? -- I was mindful of it when you first came in. Now I can pick up things... You would not be able to calculate...? The nature of the condition, it gradually comes into your central vision, so picking up things down here or appear is harder, whereas the central vision was going to go and I would lose my site entirely. You have had this since the age of nine? Since birth, but we found out when I was about nine years old, we went through a series of six-month from doctor to doctor, trying to find out what it was. Professor, we know from the success that Joe has had, and it is tangible, is this a procedure that will be useful to many people? Absolutely. We are delighted with the results with Joe. Ultimately, we are doing the gene therapy, we hope,

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to slow down significantly or even stop the disease. We have noticed in some patients like Joe that the effects of the gene therapy have boosted the vision that they currently have. What happens from here in terms of other people being able to access? The early stages in any kind of surgery, you normally thing, it is expensive, doesn't get the NHS go-ahead, who will benefit? A very good question. In the first instance, we want to treat more patients through the trials to get gene therapy treatment approved for **choroideremia**. **Choroideremia** is a very rare disease, many other conditions affect the eye which had genetic causes, even things like macular degeneration, they could be treated with gene therapy. We are seeing a method where we can use it. Joe, you have had the operation in one eye, and they are monitoring to see how your vision improves a wrist

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sustained? Over the next 18 months, they will be monitoring the vision in my right eye, the plan for the future is for the left eye. For me, I know it'll be a matter of time, whereas five years ago this was not an option. It was more like pigs would fly rather than being able to keep my site for the future. That is what is exciting. In two years' time, I might have the opportunity that I will never, ever lose my side. It is a dramatic results now. Going into it, were you concerned? Any sort of operation is a worry, I imagine an operation on your eyes is perhaps something he would think more about than other surgery? The nature of the vision in my right eye before the operation was that but I think the risk was worth taking. I felt that now was the right time to make sure that I would not lose my sight. I think the fear of losing your sight compared to actually

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taking the risk and seeing four lines more on the vision charge than I ever did before is something that you cannot put words to. It has changed your life? Absolutely. Robert and his team at Oxford are phenomenal people. And now the opportunity is that more and more people will have the chance to have their vision saved, that is exciting. Professor, thank you for your time. We will leave it on that glowing commendation from one of your patients. Thank you both for joining us. We wish you all the best, Joe. Over the last few years, Gareth Malone has assembled choirs of children, firefighters, postmen and - most famously - military wives, going on to claim the Christmas number one back in 2011. Now he's returning to the military to construct a choir of wounded ex-servicemen and women, ready to perform at the opening of the Invictus Games in Florida next month. Here's a look at his latest project. Gareth Malone is putting together a choir... Please, come in. ..for the Invictus Games.