

Eyelights

July 2024

**Confidence
on your
journey**

**Celebrating your
generosity**

Research in action

GLAUCOMA NZ
TO SAVE SIGHT



Attendees at the Glaucoma NZ 'Back to the Future' Professional Symposium, 16 June 2024

Celebrating you and your impact

This edition of Eyclights celebrates you—our amazing members, donors, volunteers, and partners. Your generous gifts in donations, time, expertise, and trust are integral to Glaucoma NZ.

Thanks to your incredible support, we can do more. You can expect more 'Love your eyes' symposiums in Taupo, Timaru, Hutt Valley, and North Auckland this year. We'll bring you more online seminars and increase regional groups to reach even more of you across the country.

We are extremely grateful to Glaukos, the company behind the iStent infinite® and PRESERFLO™ devices. They have partnered with Glaucoma NZ for the next three years to cover the cost of education for everyday New Zealanders like you.

Around 150 health professionals came together for the Glaucoma NZ 'Back to the Future' Professional Symposium in June. A sincere thanks to you again for your attendance, engagement and kind support of Glaucoma NZ. All income from these professional events go directly to fund patient education and support programs.

Members like Jane, Trish, Michael, and Arthur courageously share their stories for this issue. They make us incredibly proud of their efforts to help others and to adhere to their treatment plans. They inspire others in preserving sight.

A special thanks goes to many of you who engaged with us on preservatives (BAK) in glaucoma drops. Your insightful questions and generous donations have brought us closer to a vital clinical trial. With over \$70,763 that you've raised, we're just \$45,000 away from fully funding this essential research.

Let's keep making a difference—let's achieve this funding goal together and pave the way for better eye health for all of New Zealand.

Thank you again for your support. You help empower people on their journey with glaucoma.

Warm regards,

Pippa



Building confidence with knowledge and support

Like you, as a member of Glaucoma NZ, Jane is eager to understand as much as she can about glaucoma. She's committed to preserving her sight. "You can't mess round with your eyesight, you've only got one set of eyes" she says.

Jane had been struggling with her glaucoma. Mainly itchiness and inflammation of the eye lid which she thought came from an allergy to her cats, however since realised it was a side effect of her eye drop.

She read about Jasper in the March 2024 Eylights newsletter which prompted her to speak up about her own discomfort. She wasn't going to let the symptoms affect her quality of life.

"This is quite serious, so I've made a bit of a fuss" says Jane.

She was determined to do all she could to manage her glaucoma, sharing that her mother eventually went blind.

Jane regularly checked in with Glaucoma NZ and learned more about drops. She also found it helpful to establish a routine to relieve her symptoms. It consisted of a preservative-free lubricating eyedrop with alternating hot and cold compresses. Jane also consulted with her eye clinic.

"I rang the medical centre nurse to ask what to do when I was a bit overcome with everything. And she advised to get the technician to sit in" says Jane. This helped quite a bit. Jane took a



Jane has a special regime to manage her symptoms

pen and paper to record everything. She also took her husband Peter as an extra set of ears.

On the day, the appointment went smoothly. Her pressures were stable. And she'll follow up again soon. Thankfully, she doesn't have to put up with the itch, burning and soreness any longer. And she knows what to expect next in her treatment plan.

Throughout everything, **Jane remained proactive**, consulting with whom she could, including Glaucoma NZ.

If you are having adverse reactions to your treatment, don't suffer in silence. Reach out for support by contacting your specialist or contacting Glaucoma NZ. Support is here for you on 0800 452 826 or info@glaucoma.org.nz.



Jane's cats Tigger (left) & Grace (right)

Much to gain on a shared journey

Around five years ago Glaucoma NZ (GNZ) advertised for volunteers to join a 'calling team'.

People were needed to phone new GNZ members to provide support and build people's confidence.



Trish designs sessions with purpose

From this, Trish Murfitt was approached to help start a special **Group on the North Shore to support and reassure people with glaucoma**. GNZ organised the room, and she, alongside fellow

local John Talbot, established the group. It has been running successfully ever since.

The group meet once a month on a Saturday with between 10 to 30 in attendance. **Sessions are educational with real purpose.** They often include specialists on eye-health and offer practical tips for people with irreversible sight-loss. Trish listens to the needs of her community. She ensures people who are taking time out of busy schedules have their needs met at sessions.

The knowledge she imbues gives people confidence and helps them to relax about future treatments. She too feels supported by the people who attend, **gaining knowledge from them on a shared journey.**

Are you interested in attending or facilitating a Glaucoma NZ Group in your area? Contact Jenna on 0800 452 826 or info@glaucoma.org.nz.

Positive Arthur making a difference

Though Arthur lives with glaucoma, **he doesn't consider himself a glaucoma sufferer**. Originally from Whenuapai, he's still a country boy at heart with an infectious positivity that will make you smile. "Begin the day with a positive mindset" Arthur advises. This is the secret to a long and full life.

He diligently takes his glaucoma eye drops every morning and every night. He puts this down to self-discipline which he firmly believes is another important attribute in life. "Over many years I would be able to count on one hand the times I ever missed taking my drops" he says. "My specialist says I have extraordinary eye muscles!" he adds.

It's no surprise that Arthur spends eight to ten hours volunteering every week in the local community, helping to garden and keep local parks tidy. And it's no

surprise that **Arthur wants to continue helping his community long after his lifetime.** He's doing this with a gift to Glaucoma NZ in his will.

From 15 -21 July, Wills Week celebrates the power of your will to make a difference in the lives of charities or community causes. If you would like to know more about this different way to give to Glaucoma NZ, contact Sandy today on 0800 452 826 or you can email her at info@glaucoma.org.nz.

The Public Trust is hosting a free Wills Webinar where they and Philanthropy New Zealand share the importance of an up-to-date will, the positive impact that you can make with it and various options for including a gift to a charity. Thursday 18th July, 11am-12pm. Visit glaucoma.org.nz/wills-week-2024.

The more you give, the more you get back



Michael has a special connection with the land and people. Getty Images.

Michael's love for New Zealand and its communities is evident in his giving spirit. He recalls his time farming on the East Coast, cherishing the connection to the land and the people. At 85 years old, he's still working and loves to keep busy.

Diagnosed with glaucoma 10 years ago, **he's committed to taking eye-drops every night and attends regular eye check-ups.** "I follow my eye specialist's instructions meticulously, as I have experienced the outcome of not looking after my health," he shares.

Michael has also had diabetes. He didn't take the best care of himself which has led to the loss of a leg. He's determined to take better care nowadays, which includes preserving his precious sight. **He's helping others preserve their sight too.**

Every month since April 2018, he has donated to Glaucoma NZ to help save sight. His gifts are a way of ensuring future generations can enjoy the beauty of their surroundings. Plus, it makes him a happy human. "I believe the more you help people, the more satisfaction you will have in your life" he says.

Those, like Michael, who donate to save sight every month are part of an extraordinary group. These regular donors supercharge Glaucoma NZ so that it can plan and be strategic in its focus. Thank you, Michael and other special people just like you. You safeguard sight, build confidence, create experts and advance treatment options every month with your gifts.

To recognise just how special you are, Glaucoma NZ have given you a new name that reflects the important impact you have: **Sight Saver.** If you are part of the Sight Saver community, please accept our heartfelt gratitude for your regular support.

If you want to join Michael in creating a future where no one faces the challenges of glaucoma alone, become a Sight Saver today.

Contact Sandy on 0800 452 826, at info@glaucoma.org.nz or go online and visit glaucoma.org.nz/sightsavers.

Sight Saver
Glaucoma NZ

Thank you for your support

In addition to usual online education, Glaucoma NZ recently held a public education symposium, an inaugural fundraising dinner and a professional education symposium. **Thank you to those of you who supported each event, making them a success.**

Julia Walker: Demystifying Glaucoma Tests



Julia presents to a packed room of around 70 attendees in Tauranga, 8 June 2024

At the Tauranga ‘Love your eyes’ Symposium, Optometrist Julia Walker presented on **six (6) tests that detect and monitor glaucoma**. With her guidance, you never need to be intimidated by your check-up.

1. Tonometry is measuring eye pressure or intraocular pressure (IOP).

Julia explains “there’s not one particular pressure level at which you get glaucoma – it depends on how vulnerable your optic nerve is to pressure.” Eye pressure can vary slightly over the course of the day.

She touched on three methods including iCare Tonometry (using a portable handheld device to briefly probe the cornea), Goldmann Tonometry (using numbing eye drops with a small probe attached to a slit lamp to touch the cornea for a very accurate measurement), and Non-Contact Tonometry (air puff).

Measuring your eye pressure on a regular basis shows whether your treatment is working. If it’s not controlling your eye pressure, your treatment may need adjusting. Julia explained how you should use your glaucoma drops as usual so that you can get an accurate measure of your eye pressure in its treated state.

2. Central Corneal Thickness.

“Early on, you will have your central corneal thickness measured” Julia explains. This is a simple painless test which can be done using a range of different instruments. Most often it’s done with probe that makes brief contact with your cornea. It’s measured in a matter of seconds. “We use this measurement to finely adjust the accuracy of the eye pressure reading” says Julia. “Interestingly, a thin cornea has a higher risk of developing glaucoma.”

3. Gonioscopy checks eye drainage.

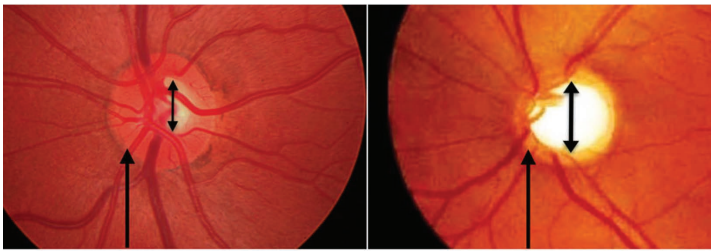
Gonioscopy examines the drainage angle of the eye, which regulates the outflow of fluid. This is the angle between the cornea and the iris. A special lens is briefly placed on the eye, with the use of a numbing eyedrop. Julia mentions that “this lens, used with the slit lamp, helps us to visualise the drainage structures of the eye”. This determines whether the drainage angle is open or closed. “It’s essential for diagnosing and managing different forms of glaucoma” she adds.

4. Optic Nerve Assessment

Assessing the optic nerve head for structural changes is another critical test.

Optic Nerve Examination

- Assess for structural changes
 - Cupping
 - Thinning of rim



Normal optic nerve head

Glaucomatous cupping

Julia says “We look for cupping, where the pale part in the middle of the optic nerve head gets larger.”

A table-top slit lamp (pictured) is used for this assessment. “We might also use dilating eye drops to enlarge the pupil for a clearer view,” she adds.

Julia points out that ‘cupping’ is one of the changes in glaucoma. “Nerve fibres in the outer rim have become damaged or lost, causing the centre of the nerve to look hollowed out.” Measuring cupping (C/D ratio) at each appointment can help diagnose and monitor glaucoma.

5. Visual Field Tests.

This test maps out peripheral vision. Julia says, “during the test, there will be a small light or other target that you are told to focus on. Make sure you keep looking at this target.”

“You will be asked to press a button to indicate when you see a small light or dot in your peripheral vision” says Julia.

“These will be of varying intensity and in different locations in your visual field. The test takes around 3 to 6 minutes per eye.” She says to “let the technician know if you don’t feel you are sitting in a comfortable position...or if you have any questions about the test procedure.” They can pause the test if needed. Blink as usual throughout the test.

A visual field test can detect the pattern of vision loss and where it occurs in your visual field. This test will be repeated over time to monitor the progression of glaucoma.

6. Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT).

OCT uses light to take cross-sectional images of the optic nerve head. “It’s a quick, painless test that helps detect early signs of glaucoma”, says Julia, adding “this technology allows us to measure structural changes accurately.”

Understanding Your Diagnosis.

Julia says “adhering to your medication schedule and attending regular follow-up appointments are vital.” She says “early detection and treatment are crucial for preserving vision and maintaining a good quality of life. Don’t hesitate to ask questions – we’re here to help you every step of the way.”

Julia Walker works at Tauranga Eye Specialists, in the public health system. She is an optometrist who is qualified to independently treat glaucoma.

Taupō



GLAU@MA NZ

LOVE
your eyes
SYMPOSIUM



Sat. 27 July, 10 - 11:30am



Suncourt Hotel & Conference Centre, 14 Northcroft Street

Free event including morning tea
Register now at glaucoma.org.nz

Exciting research in action

At an inaugural fundraiser partnered with Vision Research Foundation, around 100 invited guests gained an exclusive look at **transformative glaucoma research**.

Professor Jamie Craig travelled from Adelaide to present his research. This research has led to a polygenic risk score (PRS) named SightScore™. This is the first clinically available polygenic score for glaucoma, and one of the first in medicine. And now it's available to New Zealanders.

What was has the research led to?

“We can amalgamate a very large number of common genetic variants into a single ‘score’ that’s easy to understand” says Prof. Craig. That’s what the SightScore™ test is. This score places individuals on a continuum of risk, helping to predict their likelihood of developing glaucoma.

What does it mean for patients in NZ?

His research gives you and all New Zealanders a new option to better understand your glaucoma risk over your lifetime. And the lifetime of your loved ones. This is especially important due to the strong hereditary component of glaucoma.

Prof. Craig described how **this test aids in identifying high-risk individuals** early. Potentially before any symptoms or significant visual field loss. He discussed how it helps clinicians to personalise patient management strategies. For example monitoring, to deciding on interventions like surgery or laser treatments.

Can my family members get tested?

The SightScore™ test is currently only available through ophthalmologists and optometrists in NZ. They would request a

test for you or your loved ones who may be at risk.

The test needs a little bit of saliva from the cheek of the person to be tested which takes a minute or two. The sample goes off in the post to the SeonixBio labs in Australia. Then the algorithms run, and an accredited report is emailed back to the referring clinician around four to six weeks later.

Professor Craig says, “I’m speaking as an academic, but we also have got our science into the clinic now and **the SightScore™ test will be available in New Zealand from now.**” He confirmed “it’s a private paid tests and it’s about \$349.00 in Australia.”

Glaucoma NZ Trust Chair & Scientific Director of Vision Research Foundation, Professor Helen Danesh-Meyer says, “I think it’s a fantastic example of scientific discovery making clinical impact.”

Glaucoma NZ General Manager Pippa Martin agreed, “**this shows the tangible impact investment in research has on patient outcomes.** We were proud to partner with Vision Research Foundation for this event.”



Prof. Helen Danesh-Meyer & Prof. Jamie Craig, 15 June 2024