

Successful world class results announced for Retinitis Pigmentosa

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The Lions Eye Institute alongside PYC Therapeutics have been progressing a highly promising drug for the treatment of the leading cause of childhood blindness, Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP).

RP is a debilitating condition that begins in childhood and leads to blindness in patient's between the ages of 20 and 40. There are no treatment options currently for these patients aside from counselling. The progression to blindness significantly impacts the personal lives and livelihood of those patients affected and the people who support them.

The ground-breaking research for this new treatment took place within the Lions Eye Institute's Ocular Tissue Engineering Lab right here in Nedlands, Western Australia. The Lions Eye Institute's very own Dr Fred K. Chen and his team, worked with Prof. Sue Fletcher, Chief of Research and Development at PYC and of Murdoch University and her team to achieve these amazing results.

This collaboration has resulted in an experimental drug being used to correct the deficiency responsible for one form of RP in cells derived from patients with the disease. This is the best indication that the drug works, before clinical trials in RP begin next year with 11 patients.

Dr Chen is a leading Australian ophthalmologist and treats numerous RP patients, including families with multiple members who have developed severe RP in their early teens. Dr Chen sees the impact this disease has on people's lives daily. Dr Chen consults and operates at the Lions Eye Institute, Royal Perth Hospital and Perth Children's Hospital. His special clinical interest are in macular degeneration and inherited retinal diseases.

The work by Dr Chen and Prof. Fletcher and their teams will hopefully lead to an approved genetic therapy for RP 11 that can impact the lives of Australians who live with this debilitating disease, and the estimated 4 to 5 thousand people in the western world who would be eligible for this potential treatment.

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