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Macular Degeneration: Now that We Have All the Pieces . . . Why is There Still a Puzzle?

Editor: In 1993, there appeared four monumental articles outlining the incidence and prevalence, pathophysiology, and the so-called factors which enter into the genesis of and the solution to macular degeneration (MD) (1-4). It would seem, from the material in those articles, that all of the pieces have been provided for the causes and answers to MD. Yet, macular degeneration continues to be an increasing problem.

In the ecologic formula for disease, the antioxidants appear to serve a principal protective role. This becomes more important when it is recognized that the American public probably is not provided with adequate amounts of the antioxidants (5).

And Gertrude Stein would say, "Now that we have all the answers, what is the question?" Since the antioxidants seem to be an important factor, the answers to several questions may be helpful. What are the antioxidant blood/tissue levels in people in general? Do they change with age? Are they different in those with and without macular degeneration? Can they help treat and, more importantly, anticipate MD?

In the light of our proposal, it is clear that none of the four articles cited earlier have dealt with one of the major pieces of the puzzle, the nature and the size of the supplements. From our studies and a review of the literature, it is apparent that the management of macular degeneration would be furthered if we would start the anti-oxidants earlier, continue them for longer and in much larger-than-recommended amounts (6).

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