

FALL 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Family supports vision research into the future.

\$1.67 million for transformative research into retinal degeneration.

Fact or fiction? Test your eye health knowledge.

Blown away by the support of our incredible community.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND CEO, JENNIFER JONES



Dear Friends,

Like many of our supporters, my family has been touched by vision loss. My uncle Steve lived with Usher's syndrome, a rare genetic disease that affects both hearing and vision. I have memories from my childhood of how vibrant he was as a young man and how, as his sight diminished, this began to change.

That makes joining Fighting Blindness Canada as the President and CEO a very special and poignant step in my career. I am compelled by the cause and its vision for ambitious growth. As we enter our 50th anniversary next year and celebrate the tremendous impact Fighting Blindness Canada has had on the vision loss community and research sector, I believe our best work is still ahead of us.

A great example of this impact are the inaugural Transformative Research Awards (TRAs) we launched this year. The TRAs are a \$1.67 million investment into best-in-class international vision research, attracting the brightest innovations from around the world. You can read about the two TRA recipients on pages 3-4.

I have spoken with many members of Fighting Blindness Canada's community since my start with the organization this spring, thank you for the warm welcome! I look forward to continuing these conversations to learn how we can have a stronger impact on the lives of people looking to us for support and hope.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Jones".

Jennifer Jones

President and CEO

Fighting Blindness Canada



FAMILY SHOWS SUPPORT FOR VISION RESEARCH INTO THE FUTURE

Fighting Blindness Canada community member Matthew Jones is at least the fourth generation in his family to be affected by retinitis pigmentosa, a rare inherited eye disease that over time damages light sensing cells in the retina, leading to progressive vision loss and often blindness. He and his family have been long-standing supporters of our organization, and now, Matthew and his wife Stephanie are continuing their support by remembering Fighting Blindness Canada with gifts in their wills.



Matthew and Stephanie, both in their early thirties, met at Ontario's Western University Ivey Business School and have been together for over 12 years. In August 2022, they welcomed their first child. Matthew is profoundly grateful for the hope and support Fighting Blindness Canada has given to his family over the many years. He has found the educational resources very insightful and regards the organization as "exceptionally good at referring those needing eye health support to the right source."

Matthew is also involved in an ongoing research study led by Dr. Eric Pierce to find better treatments for retinitis pigmentosa. The Jones' know that in naming Fighting Blindness Canada in their wills, it supports future research progress into innovative treatments that will bring hope for generations to come.

"Everyone should have a will," says Matthew. "It's easy to put off when you're young but for us, we wanted to ensure our daughter was protected. A will makes things easier for those you leave behind."

Thank you to the Jones family for sharing their journey with the community and supporting the future of vision research.

If you or someone you know are interested in learning more about naming Fighting Blindness Canada in your will, please call 1.800.461.3331 or email legacy@fightingblindness.ca.

Our Health Information Line is here to help.

Do you have an eye health related question? Contact our Health Information line at healthinfo@fightingblindness.ca or call **1.888.626.2995**



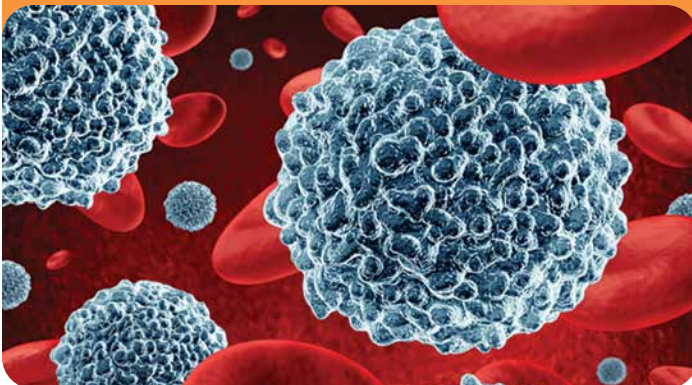
\$1.67 MILLION FOR TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH INTO RETINAL DEGENERATION

Fighting Blindness Canada is thrilled to announce \$1.67 million in funding for two Transformative Research Awards which will push the boundaries of vision science for inherited retinal diseases and glaucoma.

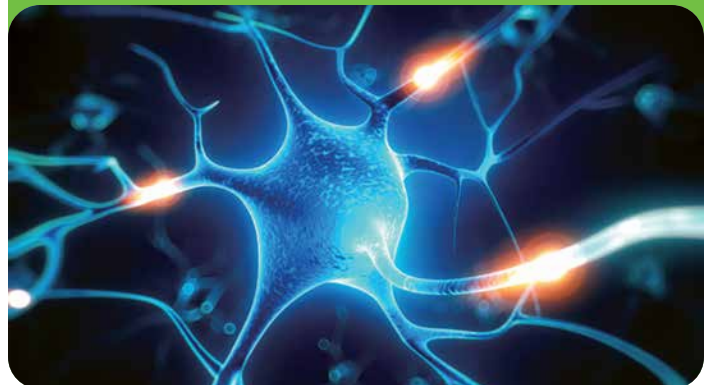
Thanks to the generosity of our donors, these Transformative Research Awards will provide large-scale, long-term funding allowing scientists to tackle big questions and test bold new ideas that can enhance our understanding of vision loss and fast forward treatments for those living with these eye conditions.

THE 2023 AWARDEES ARE...

**Developing A Drug Therapy
To Slow Vision Loss In
Inherited Retinal Diseases**



**Uncovering The Link Between
Blood Supply And Optic
Nerve Damage In Glaucoma**



Continue reading to learn more about each award winning project...

DEVELOPING A DRUG THERAPY TO SLOW VISION LOSS IN INHERITED RETINAL DISEASES

Dr. Marius Ueffing (University of Tübingen) is developing a novel neuroprotective drug therapy to reduce photoreceptor death and slow vision loss in inherited retinal diseases (IRDs), like retinitis pigmentosa. During this project, Dr. Ueffing will complete pre-clinical work, with the aim to move this potential therapy closer to clinical trials. This drug is mutation-independent and has the potential to benefit individuals with many different types of IRDs.



UNCOVERING THE LINK BETWEEN BLOOD SUPPLY AND OPTIC NERVE DAMAGE IN GLAUCOMA

Dr. Luis Alarcon-Martinez (Center for Eye Research Australia) is using cutting edge imaging technology to understand how disrupted blood supply causes optic nerve damage in glaucoma, which is the leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide. This award may lead to a new understanding of the causes of glaucoma and novel treatments to prevent vision loss. Dr. Alarcon-Martinez will be leading this work with an international team of collaborators, including Canadian researcher Dr. Adriana Di Polo (University of Montreal) and Dr. Keith Martin (Center for Eye Research Australia).



These awards are part of Fighting Blindness Canada's long-standing commitment to support innovative, ambitious, and world-renowned research. Thank you for being part of this journey with us!

Learn more about other Fighting Blindness Canada funded research at fightingblindness.ca/research.

FACT OR FICTION?

TEST YOUR EYE HEALTH KNOWLEDGE

Does eating carrots improve vision? Do blue light blocking glasses improve eye health? Below we share which common beliefs are fact or fiction. Keep reading to test your knowledge!

Reading in low light damages your eyes.

FICTION

Reading in low light does not permanently damage your eyesight, but it can cause eye strain. Symptoms of eye strain can include soreness around your eyes, headaches, and difficulty focusing. These are temporary and should go away once you break from reading or use a better light source.

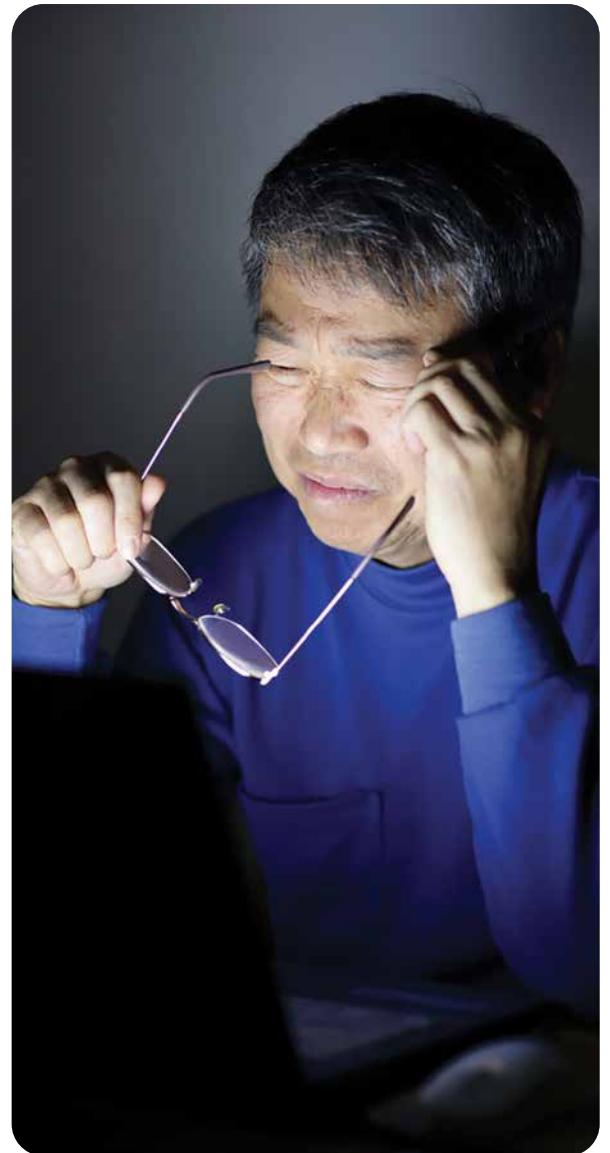
Blue light blocking glasses prevent eye damage from screens.

FICTION

There is no conclusive evidence that exposure to blue light from computer screens causes eye damage or that blue light blocking glasses improve eye health.

However, extended use of screens can cause eye fatigue, blurry vision, and dry eyes. In children, prolonged use of screens can also lead to a vision condition called myopia, or nearsightedness.

It is important when using screens to take frequent breaks. The Canadian Association of Optometrists recommends the 20/20/20 rule: every 20 minutes look away from the screen, focus on an object at least 20 feet away, for at least 20 seconds.



Being outdoors is good for your eyesight.

FACT

There are several studies that suggest spending time outside in daylight can help prevent or delay nearsightedness in children. Researchers are unclear on why this is the case, but it could be because exposure to sunlight releases a chemical called dopamine which impacts the eye or because of higher vitamin D levels that occur after being in the sun.

Another reason might be because when children spend time outside, their eyes are constantly changing where they focus which allows eyes to be more relaxed. No matter what the reason, encouraging children to play outside and reduce screen time has been shown to have a positive effect on their vision!

Eating lots of carrots will improve your eyesight.

FICTION

Eating lots of carrots (or any type of food) alone cannot improve your vision. However, there is some evidence that certain nutrients like antioxidants, vitamin A, C, E, and beta-carotene can help slow the progression of some eye conditions, including macular degeneration. Eating a balanced diet that includes leafy greens and a wide variety of colourful vegetables is important for both eye and overall health.

You can harm your vision by looking at the sun.

FACT

While spending time outdoors is good for your eye health, you should never look directly at the sun. Increased exposure to ultraviolet light from the sun can damage the retina and increase your risk of cataracts and eye cancer. Wearing sunglasses that block UV light are important to maintain your eye health.

Only get your eyes checked if there's a reason.

FICTION

Some eye conditions, including glaucoma, don't have any symptoms at early stages. Having regular eye exams can help diagnose and treat problems early before they lead to irreversible damage. In addition, if you notice any changes in your vision, including blurring, "floaters", light flashes or pain, it is important to get it checked out as soon as possible as these can be signs of a more serious problem.



You can be a Sight Saver!

Become a champion in the community by starting your own fundraiser in support of Fighting Blindness Canada. Register as a Sight Saver and start raising funds for ground-breaking vision research today at fightingblindness.ca/sightsavers.



BLOWN AWAY BY THE SUPPORT OF OUR INCREDIBLE COMMUNITY

Thanks to the support from our incredible community, Cycle for Sight 2023 was an amazing success. Over 400 participants of all ages across Canada joined the active fun, and raised an astonishing \$530,000+ in support of critical vision research!

Among Cycle for Sight participants was Fighting Blindness Canada funded researcher Dr. Stephan Ong Tone, his wife and two children. Dr. Ong Tone is an early career clinician-scientist at Sunnybrook Research Institute and an assistant professor at University of Toronto, with expertise in corneal diseases and surgery.

Dr. Ong Tone is a Clinician-Scientist Emerging Leaders

Award recipient and 2022 Eye on the Cure winner (learn how to cast your vote at 2023 Eye on the Cure below).

“Our motivation to participate in Cycle for Sight is to demonstrate to our kids the importance of living an active lifestyle, contributing back to the community, and supporting vision research. This was our second year participating and we can’t wait to join again next year.” - Dr. Stephan Ong Tone

THANK YOU to all who joined us for another amazing year! Your commitment brings us one step closer to ground-breaking discoveries for blinding eye diseases, and we too are already looking forward to next year! **Learn more at cycleforsight.ca.**

UPCOMING EVENTS

View Point Toronto
September 30

fightingblindness.ca/viewpoint

Young Leaders Summit

October 14-15

fightingblindness.ca/youngleaders

Comic Vision Vancouver

October 26

comicvision.ca



Eye On The Cure
November 16

Watch as select vision researchers battle it out for awards to support their research. With a \$50 donation, have your say by voting for the People’s Choice Award. Stay tuned for more details at fightingblindness.ca/fbceyeonthecure.