



**Dr. Linda Bennett**  
**Dr. Melanie Macbeth**

231 Belmont Street  
Belmont, MA 02478  
(617) 484-1414 Tel  
(617) 489-1957 Fax

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Dear Patients, Neighbors, and Friends:

Our autumn newsletter is a bit early this year because we wanted to remind those who have school age children not to wait too long to bring them in for an annual examination. Experts agree that 80% of what a child learns in the first 12 years is obtained through vision. And while vision is critical to learning, one out of every four children has an undetected vision problem that may impede learning. Most parents are surprised that their children do not usually complain of vision problems, even though they cannot see properly. We believe that all children should have a complete eye examination well before they begin kindergarten.

It does not seem possible, but vision disorders are the fourth most common disability in the United States and the leading cause of handicapping conditions in childhood.

**RECOGNIZING A STROKE:** In this newsletter a couple of years ago, we printed some advice on how to survive a heart attack if one occurs before you are able to seek professional help. A number of readers went out of their way to tell us they appreciated the hints. So when we saw this advice on recognizing a stroke, we felt it was ideal information to pass along. It is suggested that a layperson can recognize a stroke by asking the possible stroke victim to do four simple things: 1) SMILE; 2) Speak a simple sentence coherently (like, "It is sunny out today."); 3) Raise both arms; and 4) Stick out your tongue. If there is incoherent speech, a lack of symmetry, or if the tongue goes to one side, that may indicate a stroke. Call 911 immediately. A stroke victim may suffer severe damage if the symptoms are not recognized early.

**BACK TO ARMENIA:** Readers will remember that our office participated in a trip to Armenia in April 2005 to examine the eyes of those in need. Dr. Bennett was among seven doctors and a nurse who, at their own expense, spent a week abroad and examined over 1000 children and adults. They brought their own equipment and thousands of pairs of eyeglasses with them so that they could provide eye health care and eyeglasses to those who needed them. It was a rewarding experience – and one to be repeated in October of this year. Seven doctors have signed up for the trip. For those of you who know Armenia, the city of Yerevan will serve as the base, but other communities are on the visitation schedule.

**YOU'RE ON CANDID CAMERA:** They say 'a picture is worth a thousand words,' and when it comes to detecting abnormalities in eye tissue that is absolutely correct. This is why you will be offered the opportunity for us to take photographs of the back of your eyes with our Optos equipment. Optos provides an enlarged picture (or "optomap®") of the back of your eye (the retina) to help us discover often overlooked problems and to provide a baseline for the future.

**SUGGESTING EYE SUPPLEMENTS:** Estimates are that 2.5 billion dollars (that's billion) could be saved nationally with supplements that help preserve eyesight in seniors. The report notes that an estimated 18% of hip fractures among seniors are attributed to age-related vision loss. Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) affects approximately 35% of those over the age of 75. Antioxidants and zinc have been shown to retard the progression of AMD. At your next office visit, talk with us about dietary supplements that may be of value to you.

**WE'VE ADDED A NEW EXAM ROOM:** We continue to make changes in our new office by adding more space for handling patients more comfortably and efficiently. This month we added equipment to our fourth exam room. In addition to our regular up-to-date instruments, we have added a biomicroscope equipped with a digital camera. Now we will be able to photograph the front part of the eye when it is necessary. All images will be stored in our computer so that they can be referenced in the future.

**WHAT REALLY ARE "FLOATERS":** If you occasionally see spots in front of your eyes, don't panic – you are not alone. Those floating objects are actually proteins or other cell debris trapped in the vitreous humour (fluid in the eyeball). As they slowly drift across your vision, you may try unsuccessfully to brush them away. They may look like gnats, insects, spiders or spider webs. In ancient Roman times they were named "muscae volitantes," which translates into "flying flies." Much of the time these floaters are benign, but sometimes they are the forerunner of vitreous or retinal detachments. Sudden-onset floaters, light flashes in the eye, or a black curtain coming across your vision may indicate a more serious condition. If this happens, call our office right away and tell the receptionist about your symptoms.

Lastly, have a great fall and winter and continue to remember us when you are in need of eye and vision care.

Sincerely,

*Melanie Macbeth, OD*

Melanie Macbeth, O.D.

*Linda Bennett*

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