

2 Orchard Hills
Atherton, CA 94027
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Jonathan Thomas, Ph.D., J.D.
Chair of the Board, California Institute for Regenerative Medicine
Chair of the Governing Board, Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee

Other Members, Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee

Subject: Grant proposal TRAN1-11300

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am writing this letter in support of grant proposal TRAN1-11300 by Dr. Ted Leng, my retinologist, for a cell therapy product to treat dry age-related macular degeneration (AMD). I know first-hand how important such research is because of my and my family's health history.

My mother and I both had advanced neovascular age-related macular degeneration (nAMD). She was diagnosed in 1984 when she was 71 (the age I am now) and unbeknownst to her, had already lost the vision in one eye to nAMD. Gradually she was no longer able to drive, read, identify the faces of family and friends, or pick out her clothes to wear. I was diagnosed with intermediate dry AMD five years ago. Three years ago the disease in my left eye progressed to nAMD, I got four injections of an anti-VEGF drug, and then injections were stopped after my macula fortunately became dry again and my acuity returned. While my eyes remain stable now without injections, I am at high risk of my disease progressing again to nAMD.

There have been **no** significant advances in the treatment of dry AMD in the 34 years, since my mother's diagnosis. Further, while the treatment of nAMD with injections rather than laser therapy is considered a big improvement, the injections are not a cure and are highly undesirable for a myriad of reasons -- inconvenience, invasiveness, high cost, and unknown long-term effects of blocking VEGF, which is a normal substance in the body.

My three daughters, all in their 30s, inherited genes which put them at high risk of developing AMD. I often ask myself, when each of them turns 71, will she have developed AMD, and if so will better treatments for dry AMD and nAMD have been developed by then?

In the nearly five years that I have been under the care of Dr. Leng, I have developed great respect for his professional skills. I believe that the product he proposes would represent a significant advancement in the treatment of dry AMD, which is a very critical need. Thus I urge the scientific reviewers to score this grant proposal favorably so that it will be funded.

Sincerely,



Marianne Austin