

New guidelines for treating diabetic retinal degeneration

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Around 600,000 Austrians suffer from diabetes. This condition is frequently associated with serious retinal disorders. Along with age-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinal degeneration is one of the most common causes of blindness. The Department of Ophthalmology and Optometry at MedUni Vienna was chosen by the European Society of Retina Specialists (EURETINA) to coordinate the development of up-to-date treatment and diagnostic guidelines.

The results of a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*,

comparing the efficacy of various drugs in treating diabetic [macular degeneration](#), are now being analyzed in more detail at the Vienna Reading Center of MedUni Vienna. "The Vienna Reading Center is one of the leading centers in the world for analyzing images of the human retina," said Ursula Schmidt-Erfurth, Director of the University Hospital of Ophthalmology and Optometry at MedUni Vienna, speaking at a press conference in Vienna on Thursday. "Our analyses and studies will also form a basis for the approval of new drugs." Recent studies conducted by the Vienna Reading Center have shown that a drug called Aflibercept can be superior to other agents for treating diabetic retinal degeneration," says Schmidt-Erfurth. "Diabetics are particularly reliant on having normal vision, even if it is just to adjust their blood sugar on an everyday basis."

Macular degeneration is one of the most common eye diseases in the world and, in Europe alone, around five million people develop it every year. Degeneration of the retina brings about a gradual loss of function of these cells, thus resulting in progressive loss of visual field. The eye can perceive the peripheral field but the central visual field is blurred. Symptoms may be age related or can occur as the result of a diabetic condition. It can be treated very successfully by means of injections with the said vascular (VEGF) inhibitors, completely at the hospital's expense.

The guidelines issued by the EURETINA Working Group, which is made up of top retina experts from the largest eye hospitals in Europe, are international recommendations for treating physicians and hospitals. "Doctors will be able to use these guidelines to orient and align their treatment methods. This means that both they and their patients can be confident that treatments are State of the Art," explains Schmidt-Erfurth. In recognition of her international work, the retina expert was this year elected president of EURETINA, the largest society in its field with more than 5,000 members.

The EURETINA Working Group, under the chairmanship of Ursula Schmidt-Erfurth, had already developed guidelines for [age-related macular degeneration](#) in 2014. Further guidelines for treating occlusive vascular conditions of the eye and on retinal surgery are in the pipeline.

Provided by Medical University of Vienna

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