Cheaper eye drug proves as good as pricier one

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A new study shows that a cheaper drug for a common eye disease is as effective as a more expensive one approved for the condition.

The study found that vision improvement was the same among patients given monthly shots of Avastin (ah-VAS-tin) or Lucentis (loo-SEN-tis) for one year. The patients have an eye disease called wet macular degeneration - a common cause of blindness in the elderly.

Avastin is a cancer drug that many doctors have used to treat the eye disorder even though it wasn't approved for that use. It costs about $50 per treatment compared to $2,000 for Lucentis. Both drugs are sold by Roche's Genentech unit.

Results were published online Thursday by the New England Journal of Medicine and will be presented at a meeting on Sunday.

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