

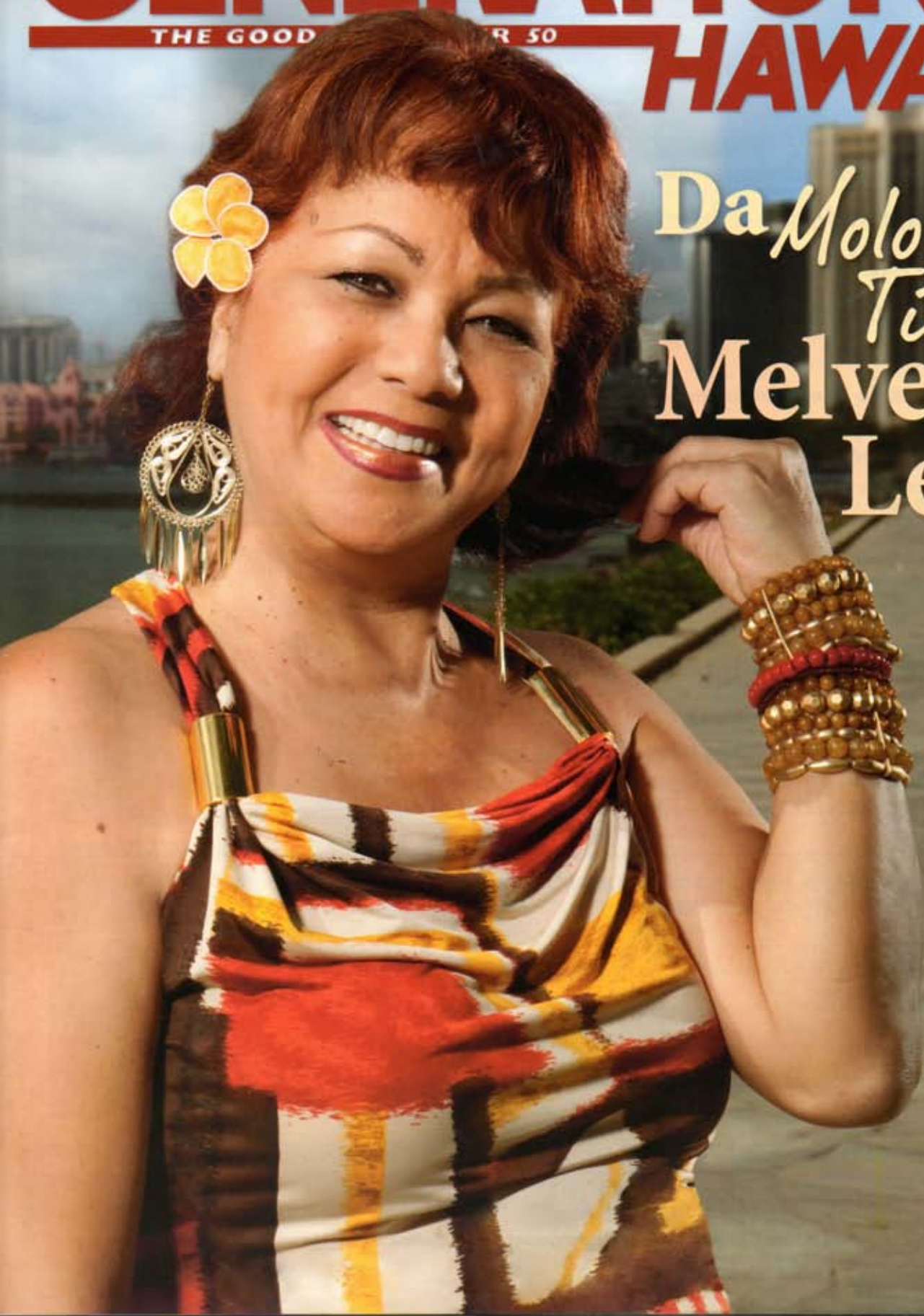
GENERATIONS

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New, Effective Treatment for Wet AMD

By Elaine Terry

The Retina Institute of Hawaii is participating in a clinical trial that offers a new type of treatment for wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD). AMD affects individuals age 50 and older and is a leading cause of vision loss and blindness in older adults. Symptoms include blurred vision, in one eye and/or the other, or wavy or distorted vision (e.g. straight lines appear crooked).

The disease has two forms: dry and wet. It starts out as dry AMD and, for most, remains in that state. Currently no treatment is available for dry AMD. The condition should be closely monitored by a doctor, though, since 10 percent of those with dry AMD develop the more serious wet AMD. It's referred to as "wet," because new abnormal blood vessels begin growing beneath the retina and leak blood and fluid.

"When the blood vessels leak and bleed, people go from fuzzy or wavy vision to extensive visual loss," says Dr.

Dr. Michael D. Bennett performing his first NeoVista procedure at the Retina Institute of Hawaii.

Michael D. Bennett of the Retina Institute. "Usually, that's too late. You hope to have access to the patients before they've had tremendous loss."


When the disease changes from dry to wet, in the early stages of wet AMD, treatment is possible. In the past, a laser procedure was used to slow down the degeneration. The current standard of care requires regular injections, which offer some visual improvement but are expensive and require multiple trips to the doctor over the course of one to two years.

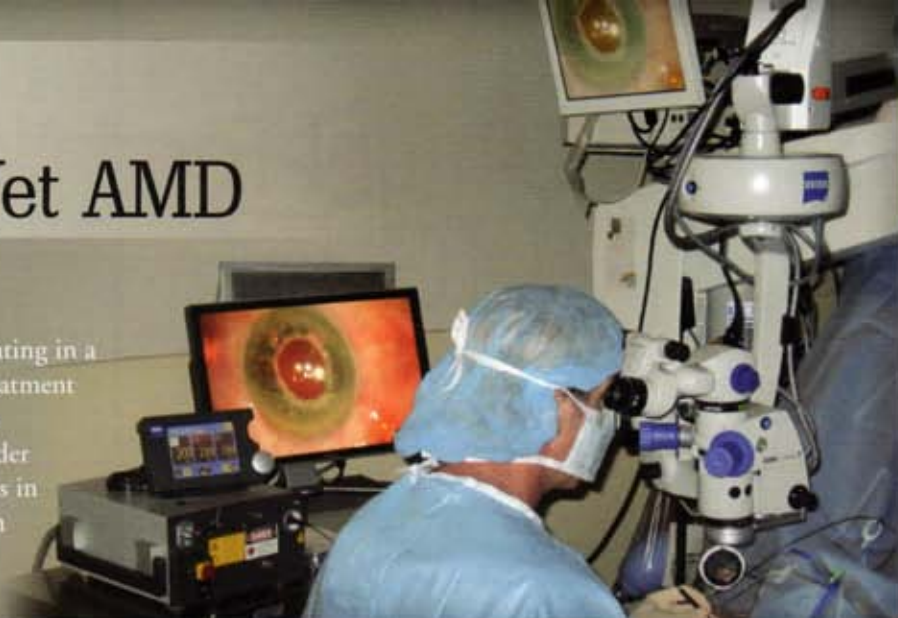
The new treatment from NeoVista offers a lot of promise, with patients showing dramatic improvement in their vision. A microscopic dose of radiation is applied to the abnormal blood vessels, and Avastin (an anti-vascular endothelial growth factor agent) is injected into the eye. The procedure takes about four minutes, says Bennett. One month later, the patient receives another injection. After that, some individuals may not need further treatment. What's most exciting, says Bennett, is that sometimes the wet AMD disappears completely.

One of the participants in the clinical trial, Jean Boyer, began noticing symptoms of distorted vision last year. He thought it was cataracts. He visited his doctor, who diagnosed him with AMD and referred him to the Retina Institute. Luckily, he qualified for the NeoVista treatment. Today, Boyer says his vision is much better.

For participants who qualify for the trial, treatment is covered by NeoVista. Normal continued care is billed to the patient's insurance company.

It offers a lot of hope for the thousands of people who are diagnosed with wet AMD each year. After the trial, the treatment awaits approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

"If this therapy is proven safe and is proven to be as efficacious as we think it is, it's really going to address a significant need for patients with wet macular degeneration," Bennett says. 



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