

[View this email in your browser](#)



EDITORIAL

In this edition of ENEWS we are focusing on the amazing research progress and the challenge that this brings to the retinal community. We expect at least three new treatments will be registered before the end of 2027, with many more to follow.

The question we posed at our recent Annual General Meeting is

“Are we ready?”

Are patients ready- do they have an accurate clinical diagnosis, a genetic diagnosis, do they have enough knowledge and motivation to advocate for these treatments to be accessible in South Africa.

Are our clinicians ready- do we have the necessary expertise to administer sub- retinal gene therapy.

Are funding streams available to make these exciting developments affordable to both state and private patients.

This challenge will only be overcome if the eye health community unite- patients, clinicians, activists, parents,

Government and concerned citizens need to work together to make this dream come true.

Ready to meet this challenge is the new Board of Retina South Africa.

Editor

Claudette Medefindt

Meet our new Chairperson - Caryl Baum



Caryl's Pledge as our new Chairperson

My dear colleagues, my friends, It is with deep humility and great honour that I accept the role of Chairperson of Retina

South Africa. My commitment to this role is fuelled by my passion for our vision and mission — to serve, to uplift, and to create lasting impact in the lives of those we support.

I wish to thank our board for electing me to this position and entrusting me with this responsibility. Our stalwarts Mariza, Jean, Claudette, Anton, and Renesh, your support is the backbone of our work, and I stand here not alone, but as part of a team united by purpose and strengthened by shared values. I warmly welcome our new board members, Ferdie Danzfuss,, Shannon Pretorius, Karla Rossouw and Lauren Jonas whose talents, expertise, and diverse experiences will enhance our leadership and help guide our organisation into the future.

As Chairperson, I pledge to uphold the highest standards of governance, transparency, and accountability. I will work tirelessly to ensure that our organisation remains true to its mission, responsive to the needs of our beneficiaries, our members, those who support us, our community, our sponsors, our grantors and Scientific council, and aligns with the principles of integrity and service.

Together, we will build on the foundation laid by those who came before us. We will broaden our programmes, expand our reach, and deepen our impact. Our work is not just about projects or policies — it is about people, dignity, and hope. With the continued support of our members, our supporters, sponsors, and grantors, we will achieve even greater milestones.

I look forward to working hand-in-hand with our dedicated staff and support staff and in close partnership with our CEO Manny Moodley, and special events and para- sports manager Lindsay

Engelbrecht, as together we drive our mission forward with unity and commitment.

I wish to build strong collaborations with other like-minded organisations, so that together we can amplify our impact and extend the reach of our mission. I accept this role with gratitude, determination, and faith in what we can achieve together.

“Let us move forward with courage, compassion, and conviction, knowing that our collective efforts will shape a brighter future for our blind and visually impaired community”.

Thank you

Meet the New Board

NEW BOARD

A new chapter. A shared vision. A stronger future together.



Mariza Jurgens
Vice-Chairperson



Claudette Medefindt
Secretary



Jean Bowler
Treasurer



Anton van Rooyen
Management Committee



Renesh Singh
Management Committee



Ferdi Danzfuss
Management Committee



Shannon Pretorius
Management Committee



Lauren Jonas
Management Committee



Karla Rossouw
Management Committee



a Cure in Sight for Blindness

WEBSITE RELAUNCH

RETINA SOUTH AFRICA
A Cure in Sight for Blindness

OUR NEW WEBSITE IS LIVE!

Fresh look. Better experience.
Same mission.

- MOBILE FRIENDLY**
Designed to work seamlessly on any device.
- EASIER NAVIGATION**
Find what you need quickly and easily.
- SUPPORT & RESOURCES**
Information and support when you need it most.
- LATEST NEWS & EVENTS**
Stay informed on news, events and ways to get involved.

EXPLORE OUR NEW WEBSITE TODAY!
www.retinasa.org.za

Our popular website www.retinasa.org.za has had a complete makeover.

It is packed with all the information that people need to live their best life with retinal degeneration.

The accessibility score is on par with the Foundation Fighting Blindness, USA, at 99%.

Congratulations to Simplr for this great tool.

We'd love to hear what you think of the new site. Drop us a mail at info@retinasa.org.za.

EXPLORE OUR NEW WEBSITE

FREE - WORKSHOP SERIES - LIVING WELL WITH VISION LOSS

Starting in World Retina Week **20 to 27 September**, and continuing through Eye Care Awareness month, Retina South Africa is hosting a digital series of interactive workshops. These will feature guest presenters but will focus on participants questions and discussion on various life aspects that affect people with vision loss.

The duration of these sessions will last around 90 to 120 minutes and will be available on the Zoom platform.

Spaces are limited, please register for the session that you wish to attend.

For more details e-mail: headoffice@retinasa.org.za

LIVING WITHOUT FEAR - TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2026 - 18h00



Step forward with courage and hope, exploring practical tools and coping strategies to help you navigate life after a diagnosis or progressive vision loss. Ways to manage grief, anxiety, and isolation while rebuilding confidence, resilience, and the freedom to embrace life without fear.

Register: Living Without Fear

KNOW YOUR EYES - PROTECT YOUR EYES - TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2026 - 18h00

Learn basic facts about vision, inheritance and your condition. What and how to eat, UV and Blue light protection and daily practices to support vision health.



Register: Know Your Eyes, Protect Your Eyes

MOVING BEYOND SIGHT - TUESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2026 - 18h00



Inspiring possibilities through Sport & Movement. Meet visually impaired athletes, share their personal journeys, answer your questions, and explore how movement and sport build confidence, independence and connection.

For newly diagnosed, supporting a loved one, or simply curious, discover how an active lifestyle can transform lives. For the less active, learn stretching and armchair moves.

Register: Moving Beyond Sight

MOVING WITH CONFIDENCE - TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2026 - 18h00

What is mobility training and how it can liberate you and give you independence. Expectations and limitations - Guide dogs, various types of canes and mobility devices



Register: Moving With Confidence

THE WORLD IN YOUR POCKET - TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2026 - 18h00



Amazing accessible tech, apps and tools which are transforming the way that blind and visually-impaired persons interact with the world around them. How to access tools you need to change your life.

Register: The World In Your Pocket

EMPLOYMENT & EMPOWERMENT - TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER 2026 - 18h00

Know Your Rights at Work – What are your rights as a blind or visually-impaired person in the working world, and what is reasonable accommodation? Know your rights and become an advocate for yourself!



Register: Employment & Empowerment

***SEEING DIFFERENTLY, LIVING FULLY - TUESDAY 3
NOVEMBER 2026 - 18h00***



Age related Macular Degeneration and Diabetic eye disease explained.

Register: Seeing Differently, Living Fully

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on 25 Saturday July, this was kindly hosted by Roche SA at their headquarters in Vorna Valley, Gauteng.

A record number of people attended, both in person and online.

The keynote speaker was Professor John Marshall, MBE, who gave a perfect overview of retinal research. Prof Marshall is a

global leader in vision and was a pioneer in the development in the use of laser technology in vision. **Watch/Listen to Prof Marshall's Keynote Talk**

Claudette Medefindt gave an update on current promising clinical trials **Watch/Listen Claudette's Talk**

Ferdie Danzfuss introduced the exciting Umsizi reading App, that converts text to speech in all 11 South African languages, that he has developed. **Watch/Listen to Ferdi's Talk**

Manny Moodley gave an update on the Visions Conference. **Watch/Listen Manny's Talk**

The business section of the meeting was not recorded but minutes of the meeting will be circulated and are available on request.

RESEARCH NEWS *by Claudette Medefindt*

PLEASE NOTE- Retina South Africa does not endorse any treatments or supplements discussed in this E-News. Please consult your eye care professional.

RNA Research Brings New Hope for Vision

RNA technology, best known for its role in COVID-19 vaccines, is now being used to develop new treatments for retinal conditions. Why is this so exciting? RNA-based medicines work on the genetic instructions that cells use to make proteins. Unlike traditional gene therapy, many RNA approaches do not permanently alter DNA, which makes them safer and more adaptable. The retina is considered an especially attractive

target because it is accessible for local treatment and requires small doses, usually via an intra ocular injection.

Gene modification, however, targets the DNA and requires an intra retinal injection of a modified virus carrying new genetic information. The DNA is protected in the nucleus of the cell and adverse events such as inflammation and retinal detachment are a serious risk in sub retinal injections.

RNA-based therapies can help correct faulty genetic instructions, protect retinal cells, and potentially slow or prevent vision loss.

Several treatments are already being tested in clinical trials, offering hope for conditions such as Retinitis Pigmentosa, Stargardt Disease, Usher Syndrome and Leber Congenital Amaurosis. Some of the RNA based treatments in clinical trials are:

Antisense Oligonucleotides (ASOs also called AONs)

These are short synthetic strands of genetic material that bind to RNA and modify how it is processed. [Like covering a wound with a Band-Aid- it's still there but you don't see it.] The cellular machinery skips the masked area, but a working copy of the protein is still produced

Researchers are using them to:

- Correct faulty RNA selection
- Silence harmful genes
- Restore production of essential proteins

EXAMPLES:

- Early studies demonstrated that RNA-based correction of the CEP 290 form of Leber Congenital Amaurosis [LCA] by the AON Sepofarson improved retinal function. Sepul Bio's Sepofarson study is now in phase 3.
 - Sepul Bio's AON treatment for the USH2A gene causing Usher Syndrome and RP is now in Phase 2 and has been fast tracked.
 - Ascidians RNA editing for Stargardt Disease is in phase 1 / 2
 - PYC Therapeutics- RP11[PRPF31 gene], AON Phase 1 / 2
-

Optobionics or Photoswitches

In advanced retinal degeneration the death of photoreceptors means that to restore vision, alternative pathways of converting the photons of light to biological messages to the optic nerve must be developed.

The neural layers of cells that are downstream from the rods and cones remain largely intact in many forms of RD. Researchers are making good progress in conferring light sensitivity to either the bipolar cells or the ganglion cells. As there are 100 million rods and 6 million cones in the human retina versus 10 million bipolar cells and just over a million ganglion cells, less vision will obviously occur. But for people who have no opportunity of photoreceptor rejuvenation, as in stem cell treatment, this reprogramming of neural cells is very encouraging. In addition to being less invasive it will also not interfere with existing vision and will be applicable to many conditions.

EXAMPLES:

Both Bionic Sight and Gensight have trials targeting retina ganglion cells in phase 1 / 2.

Nanoscope's Phase 2 trial targets bipolar cells in both RP and Stargardt Disease.

Ray Therapeutics -phase 1 /2 trial for Stargardt Disease targeting bipolar cells.

Other Promising Trials

There are over 100 Active trials in USA, UK and Europe. Around 30 of these are in Phase 2 or later and 10 are close to registration.

For information on a specific condition or gene subtype see:

www.fightingblindness.org - research – clinical trials pipeline.

www.clinicaltrials.gov search for the condition plus gene or the NCT number of the clinical trial.

Artificial Vision

The PRIMA System is an implantable artificial retina designed to restore central vision in people with advanced dry age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

The system uses a tiny wireless implant beneath the retina with external smart glasses with a camera and projector. A pocket processor converts images into signals for the implant which stimulates surviving retinal cells, allowing patients to perceive shapes, letters, and in some cases read words. It is one of the most advanced retinal prostheses currently in development and

the company reports that a pivotal European trial is aimed at regulatory approval.

Neuralink Blindsight

The Neuralink project by Elon Musk is developing brain-computer interfaces (BCIs) to create a direct communication pathway between the brain and computers and has focused on helping people with paralysis.

Their vision restoration project, called Blindsight, aims to bypass damaged eyes or optic nerves by sending visual information directly to the brain's visual cortex. Unlike retinal implants such as PRIMA, which require surviving retinal cells, Blindsight is intended to work even when the retina or even the eye itself is badly damaged. The latest available information indicates that Blindsight remains in the preclinical and early development stage and has not yet reported any kind of human efficacy data.

The U.S. FDA has granted Blindsight a "Breakthrough Device" designation, which is intended to help accelerate development and regulatory review. www.science.xyz

DURBAN, WE ARE COMING TO YOU!

DURBAN,

We Are Coming to You!

On Saturday, 29 August 2026, Retina South Africa brings our members, families, friends and partners together in KwaZulu-Natal for an afternoon of discovery, connection and hope.



Come with your questions and curiosity.
Leave with information, ideas and a community
that stands with you!



A FREE EVENT

A light lunch and refreshments will be served.

EVENT DETAILS



DATE:
Saturday, 29 August 2026



TIME:
12:00 to 15:00
(midday to 3 pm)



VENUE:
Tape Aids for the Blind,
14 Mitchell Crescent,
Essenwood, Berea,
Durban, KwaZulu-Natal



COST:
Free of charge



RSVP:
By 23 August 2026

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT



**BREAKTHROUGHS
IN RETINAL
RESEARCH**



**ASSISTIVE
TECHNOLOGY**



**PARA-SPORT
OPPORTUNITIES**



**EXHIBITORS FROM
ACROSS KZN**



**TIME TO
CONNECT**



**SEATING IS LIMITED,
SO PLEASE CONFIRM YOUR
ATTENDANCE SOONEST BY
CONTACTING US:**



TELEPHONE:
011 450 1181



EMAIL:
headoffice@retinasa.org.za

Date: Saturday, 29 August 2026

Time: 12:00 to 15:00

Venue: Tape Aids for the Blind, 14 Mitchell Crescent,
Essenwood, Berea, Durban,

Cost: Free to all members in good standing.

On Saturday, 29 August 2026, Retina South Africa brings our members, families, friends and partners together in KwaZulu-Natal for an afternoon of discovery, connection and hope.

Presenters and exhibitors will share what is happening right now in retinal treatments/research, innovative assistive tech and

support services for our members. This is not a meeting you will want to miss out on!

What you can expect:

- Breakthroughs in retinal treatment and research — the latest international and local developments in gene therapy, clinical trials and emerging treatments.
- Assistive technology you can see, hear and try — the apps, devices and tools that are quietly changing what is possible at home, at work and on the move.
- Para-sport opportunities — how members of every age and ability can get active, get competitive and get connected through adaptive sport.
- Exhibitors from across KwaZulu-Natal — meet the organisations, services and innovators working alongside us in the province, for all the latest tech and services available.
- Time to connect — more conversation, more community and more of the member-to-member connection you have been asking us for.

Come with your questions and curiosity. Leave with information, ideas and a community that stands with you! A light lunch and refreshments will be served.

RSVP: By 23 August 2026. Seating is limited, so please confirm your attendance soonest by contacting the Retina SA head office on: Telephone: 011 450 1181, Email: headoffice@retinasa.org.za

Need more support: book a session with one of our social workers or book a Zoom family session covering all aspects of your specific condition please email claudette@retinasa.org.za.

GET INVOLVED

Become A Member: To become a member in good standing, please complete a membership form and pay the annual membership fee of R240 or apply for a fee waiver, stating your monthly income. This gives you free counselling, support and entry into the **Save Our Sight (SOS)** Campaign, with a monthly prize of R500.

Join SOS Campaign: Support us by joining the SOS campaign for R250 per ticket.

Donate or **pay** via the website store.

WhatsApp Groups: Join our WhatsApp groups for peer support- Adults with RD, Youth 16+, Parents of RD children, Stargardt Parents, Work seekers.

Listen to our podcasts: Retinal Realities and Back to Basics on our YouTube Channel **Retina South Africa - YouTube**

Woolworths My Difference: Download Woolworths App - select My Difference and select Retina SA as your beneficiary.

Para-Sport: Join our para-athletes team, as a participant or sighted guide.

Ride Joburg 2026

Register to Ride Today, so someone else can See Tomorrow.
This November, don't just ride for the finish line — ride for a

future where vision loss doesn't have to mean losing independence, opportunity or hope.

Join Team Retina SA at Ride Joburg on 22 November and turn every kilometre into meaningful support for people affected by vision loss. Whether you're an experienced cyclist or simply looking for a challenge that means something, your ride can make a difference.

Register today and ride with purpose. **Register**

Dream Zanzibar Getaway



A Dream Zanzibar Getaway Could Be Yours! Imagine 7 nights in paradise for two, flights included, at the breathtaking Michamvi Sunset Bay Resort in Zanzibar — all while supporting an incredible cause.

For just R100, you could enter our Zanzibar Dream Raffle and stand a chance to win a luxury getaway valued at R75,000. It's a little bit of luck, a whole lot of paradise, and an opportunity to help make a real difference for people affected by vision loss. Why not let your next ticket be the one that takes you to Zanzibar?

Draw date **20 February 2027**

Get your Tickets Today

Swing for Sight

Where Great Golf Meets Great Company.

Looking for a day that brings together great golf, meaningful networking and an unforgettable experience? Swing for Sight is more than a golf day — it's an opportunity to connect with business leaders, professionals and fellow supporters while enjoying an exceptional day at Royal Johannesburg Golf Club.

Come for the golf, stay for the connections, and leave knowing your participation is helping Retina SA support people affected by vision loss. Happening 1 September 2026, and with limited four-ball and padel team spaces still available, now is the time to secure your place.

Secure your place

ADVERTISEMENT



**Nurture Your Eyes, Enhance Your
Wellness**



What Makes Nurture Vision Omega 3 Supplements So Effective

Sourced for purity and high absorption, our omega-3 supplement delivers EPA and DHA to help reduce inflammation, stabilise tear quality, and support the health of your heart, brain, and eyes.

Ingredient Benefits

- EPA & DHA
- Reduce inflammation
- Support cognitive function
- Support cardiovascular function

Functional Benefits

- Supports whole-body anti-inflammatory response
- Improves heart and brain health
- Complements Eye Health and Dry Eye supplements for full eye wellness
- Enhances tear quality and reduces dry eye symptoms

Looking after your eyes doesn't stop at one supplement. Explore the full Nurture Vision range — from Dry Eye support to Eye Health formulas — designed to work together for complete visual wellness.

Visit www.nuturevision.co.za to see the full range.

CONTACT US

For support, advice, referral to service providers.

WA 082 074 7116, Fixed line +27114501181

Email: headoffice@retinasa.org.za

Website: www.retinasa.org.za

LIKE AND FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Retina South Africa Disclaimer

Information disseminated by Retina South Africa is for information purposes only. Readers must discuss any intervention with their Eye Care Practitioner. Information in this E-News does not imply that Retina South Africa endorses any particular therapy, intervention or medication. Retina South Africa assumes no responsibility for the use made of any information provided in this newsletter.



Copyright (C) @2024 Retina South Africa. All rights reserved.

Tel: [+27 011 450 1180](tel:+270114501180) | Email: headoffice@retinasa.org.za

www.retinasa.org.za

Our physical address is:

Retina South Africa
2nd Floor, Sami-G Office Square
80 Greenvale Road
Wilbart, Germiston,
Gauteng, South Africa

[unsubscribe](#)