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The Genetic Epidemiology of Age-Related Maculopathy

James H. Schick¹, Sudha K. Iyengar¹, Robert C. Elston¹, Bonnie A. Fijal¹,
Barbara E. Klein² and Ronald Klein²

1. *Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Case Western Reserve University,
Cleveland, Ohio, USA*

2. *Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, University of Wisconsin
Medical School, Madison, Wisconsin, USA*

KEY WORDS Macular degeneration; blindness; senescence; multifactorial inheritance.

ABSTRACT Age-related maculopathy is a leading cause of blindness in the elderly. It is a major public health issue of increasing importance as populations become older. Currently considered untreatable, it is a complex disease associated with both genetic and environment factors. As currently reviewed, the importance of genetics in the etiology of age-related macular degeneration has been demonstrated by family studies, twin studies and segregation analysis. Ongoing research at the molecular level is endeavoring to isolate genes involved in the pathogenesis of this complex disease with the goal of identifying those individuals who are susceptible to impairment of visual function prior to overt manifestation of disease. The ultimate aim of this research is to identify molecular targets for appropriate and early therapeutic intervention.

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