Condition is primary cause of blindness

Dear Jo:

Ny wife, age 71, is losing her
sight. Her diagnosis is macular deseneration. Although I have learned
a great deal about this condition as

of late, I would appreciate it if you
would address this subject in your
recolumn. Thank you.

Dear Mr. C.:
Macular degeneration is the lead-ting cause of blindness in North America. It accounts for one-third of all cases of vision loss.

The meanly to

wall cases of vision loss.

The macule is a pea-size spot on the retina, which is at the back of the eye. When light enters the eye, we are able to see because as the light enters the retina, it is turned into nerve impulses that the brain understands as an image.

The macula processes the details in the central part of the image, it is been so that the control of the control of

gerontology A. Jolayne

Farrell

ble for the side (peripheral) vision that is more sensitive to low light, making night vision possible.

IF THE macula deteriorates, the center of the affected person's vision becomes blurred and all detail is lost.

lost.

Although the exact cause of the deterioration is not yet understood, it has been linked to infections, high blood pressure, arterioselerosis and general diseases like diabetes. It also appears to be associated closely with the process of aging.

In macular degeneration, as the

vessels that nourish it, breaks down.
At the same time, new shormal
blood vessels form. Biladaness results
when these blood vessels bleed and
displace the macula. Cut off from its
blood (or food) supply, the macula is
permanently damaged.
The course of the condition can be
rapid or slow, although it generally
cocurs over a period of a few years.
Peripheral vision remains, but the
person has difficulty seeing at a distance, or doing detailed work. Faces

are blurry and colors are hard to dis-tinguish.

TREATMENT BEGINS with an eye examination to try to determine the cause of the condition. Lasers are sometimes used to seal damaged blood vessels in the early state.

Unfortunately, because so little is known about the direct cause of macular degeneration, effective treatment is not pessible in all cases. While macular degeneration cannot be reversed, people with this condition are usually able to contin-

ue with their daily activities by us-ing their side vision, and by making the best use of their remaining detail

ision.

Mr. C., I hope you and your wife
re in close contact with a low-vision are in close contact with a low-vision clinic, as many practical suggestions and handy devices are available for people with this problem.

Readers can write to Jolayne Farrell at 11 Cynthia Crescent, Richmond Hills, Ontario LAE 1J3.



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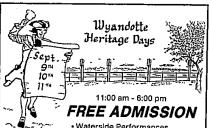
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