

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## SIGHT-SAVING INNOVATIONS TO BE UNVEILED AT MAJOR SYDNEY EVENT

An international eye health conference starting in Sydney this Friday will highlight landmark work on genetics and new treatments, which is saving the sight of children and older people at high risk of eye disease.

The Asia Pacific Vitreo-retina Society (APVRS) [Congress](#) brings together 900 eye doctors from 20 countries and global experts in retinal diseases, which are a very common cause of blindness worldwide.

The retina is a thin layer of tissue on the back wall of the eye, containing millions of light-sensitive cells and other nerve cells that receive and organise visual information. Damage to the macula such as in “wet” macular degeneration occurs when blood vessels grow and leak into the retina, causing rapid loss of sight if left untreated.

“New drugs and surgical technologies can restore sight in patients who otherwise would have gone blind from macular degeneration and diabetes,” explains Dr Andrew Chang, Sydney retinal specialist and Congress Convenor. “In Asia and Australia, even common conditions such as myopia can cause complications, endangering the vision of young and healthy people”.

Attendees will hear how Australians are leading the way in gene therapy trials, where a modified harmless virus containing a gene that stops the condition is injected. For patients this will potentially mean a one-off treatment instead of invasive monthly injections. The research, by Lions Eye Institute, was the first in Australia using gene therapy in any medical field.

There will be presentations on the [bionic eye](#), which improves quality of life for those suffering genetic and incurable eye disorders. The bionic eye uses an implanted device inside the eye to send electrical impulses to the brain of a person with partial or full vision loss, allowing them to perceive shapes and obstacles in front of them. Experts in stem cell therapy and drug delivery systems will be sharing their experience.

A telemedicine initiative in New Zealand that has helped reduce vision loss in children with diabetes is also on the agenda. Nurses trained in medical photography prepare high-resolution images in remote locations, which are then sent electronically to the ophthalmologist for assessment.

### About APVRS Congress

APVRS Congress will be held at the Hilton Hotel, Sydney, from 31 July to 2 August. The full program and list of speakers are on the [event website](#). The varied format combines update sessions, interactive panels and case studies on challenging medical scenarios, stem cells, nanosecond lasers, diagnostic dilemmas and new surgical techniques.

This is the major meeting of the Asia-Pacific Vitreo-retina Society (APVRS), whose members are ophthalmologists sharing the common goal of raising public awareness of vitreoretinal diseases.

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