



## Who we are...

Since 1989, Med League Support Services, Inc. has aided attorneys in 37 states. We perform these services:

- Analyze medical records
- Develop case chronologies
- Screen malpractice cases for merit
- Prepare PowerPoint presentations for settlement negotiations or trial
- Locate nursing & physician experts
- Prepare pain and suffering reports
- Transcribe handwriting
- Prepare life care plans
- Assist with demonstrative evidence
- Prepare medical illustrations
- Assist with preparation of demand letters and settlement brochures

## Med League Support Services, Inc.

260 Route 202-31  
Suite 200 Liberty Court  
Flemington, NJ 08822  
Phone: (908) 788-8227  
Fax: (908) 806-4511

E-mail:

[mail@medleague.com](mailto:mail@medleague.com)

Web site:

<http://www.medleague.com>

**Patricia Iyer, MSN, RN,  
LNCC, CLNI**

*Past President of the  
American Association  
of Legal Nurse  
Consultants*

Vision Changes and the Elderly: Is Your Law Firm an Accident Waiting to Happen?

**“Come quick! A woman fell in the hallway!”** When your secretary

bursts into your office, your heart

sinks. Are people at risk

for injuring themselves at

your law firm? Have you

made the necessary

changes needed to

accommodate the visual

changes of the workers

and clients who walk up

your stairs, come through

your doors, or use your

bathrooms? Have you

considered the coming

epidemic of visual loss

associated with the aging

of the population? Age

related macular degen-

eration (AMD) is the number one

cause of vision loss and legal blindness

in adults over 60 in the U.S. As our

population ages, and the baby

boomers advance into their 50s and

60s, we will see a virtual epidemic of

AMD. Perhaps 14%-24% of the U.S.

population aged 65-74 years and

35% of people aged 75 years or more

have the disease. Although it rarely

causes total blindness, age-related

macular degeneration robs those

affected of their sharp central vision

and can dim contrast sensitivity and

color perception. It destroys the clear,

“straight ahead” central vision neces-

sary for reading, driving, identifying

faces, watching television, doing fine

detailed work, safely navigating stairs

and performing other daily tasks we

take for granted. Peripheral vision may not be affected, and it is possible to see “out of the corner of your eye”. The impact of developing AMD can be devastating to those who were independent and active prior to the onset of this cruel impairment. Their visual world

gradually diminishes into a

vague blur, making

ordinary daily activities

challenging. [1] Cata-

tracts, glaucoma, diabetic

retinopathy, stroke, and

retinal tears also impact

vision. Any of these

conditions may be

present in the elderly with

whom you interact.

Up until about

six years ago, there was

no treatment for AMD. It

is currently treated with

vitamins, argon laser, light

sensitive laser, or injections into the eye.

The vitamins are specific to eye health,

and include beta-carotene, Vitamin C,

Vitamin E, zinc and copper. Argon laser

cauterizes abnormal blood vessels and

lesions close to the optic nerve. This

treatment may provide only temporary

improvement or may worsen vision by

creating an area of scar tissue. Light

sensitive laser, or photodynamic therapy,

is performed five minutes after a dye is

injected intravenously. The patient

remains sensitive to light for five days,

and is unable to be outside, sit near a

window, or be under a halogen light. This

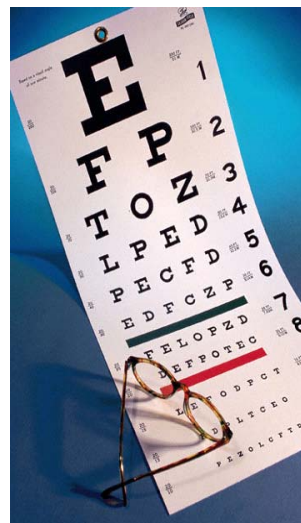
is a serious restriction - third degree

burns will result from exposure to bright

lights.

The concept of intravitreal

injections into the eye sends shivers up



most people's spines. Kenalog and Avastin are both being used off label for this purpose, and Lucentis, which was approved for use in June 2006, is also employed. Kenalog injections are associated with major risks, including infection, steroid induced glaucoma, and retinal detachment if the needle is put in the wrong spot. Avastin injections cost about \$50 per dose compared to \$1950 per dose for Lucentis. Lucentis must be injected every 4 weeks for 4 months, and then quarterly. [2] Macugen has been approved for treatment and is injected into the eye every 6 weeks. Given the expense, complexity, and low success rates for treatment of AMD, the best method is prevention of eye damage.

---

Walk around your law firm viewing it as if your next visitor had impaired vision. What do you see?

Are the hallways highly polished, creating a glaring surface? Carpeting or nonglare finishes are safer. Is there extra lighting in the hallway and stairwell?

Is the furniture in the waiting room beige, pink or gray, making it difficult for the older eye to see? Bright contrasting colors - red, orange and yellow - are easier to distinguish.

Are there redwells on the floor in the way of traffic?

Do the stairs lack hand railings?

Are there large picture windows open to the view outside, but allowing glare to overwhelm the scene? Better, keep the shades or blinds closed.

Are the forms you frequently hand to people to read printed in a small (10 or 12) font or do you have a large print version available? Are magnifying glasses available?

Are the doorways of the rooms painted in the same color as the wall, or are they in a contrasting color to make them easier to see?

Do your lamps have glare? Do you have small lamps that can be focused on paper that you want your client to be able to read?

Do you have a dimmer switch attached to overhead lights that permits an increase in light or use bulbs that have three settings?

Is the switch plate the same color as the wall, or is it a contrasting color or have a light built into the switch?

Do you serve coffee or tea to older clients in cups with contrasting rims?

### Tips for attorneys: What you can do to protect your eyesight

1. Stop smoking. Tobacco seems to interfere with the absorption of lutein, an antioxidant that protects the eyes from ultraviolet light.
2. Wear sunglasses when exposed to blue light or sunlight and use caps with brims to protect the eyes, even on cloudy days.
3. Control blood pressure. The link between high blood pressure and AMD has been the subject of much research.
4. Eat a healthy diet low in saturated fats and high in fruits and vegetables.
5. Keep your blood glucose under optimum control if you are diabetic.

1. [www.amd.org](http://www.amd.org)

2. L. Samorski, Emergent Therapies in Macular Degeneration, National Gerontological Nurses Association Annual Conference, October 6, 2006

---

**Med League offers aging simulations and sensitivity training for law firm staff in select geographical areas. Your staff will have an opportunity to experience the changes in senses associated with aging. Med League provides expert witnesses and medical record summaries for cases involving injuries to the elderly, as well as plain English explanations of medical issues. Contact Pat Iyer for details.**

---

### New Resources for Cases involving the Elderly

Patricia Iyer (Editor) *Nursing Home Litigation: Investigation & Case Preparation*, 2006, available through [www.medleague.com](http://www.medleague.com)

University of Maryland School of Medicine videocassettes and DVDs that may be purchased or rented concerning elder care [www.videopress.org](http://www.videopress.org).

*Thesaurus of Aging Terminology*, available for \$10.00 from AARP, provides terms useful for searching the AgeLine Database of AARP. Contact [ageline@aarp.org](mailto:ageline@aarp.org) for information.

Barbara Accello, *The Long Term Care Legal Desk Reference: Understanding and Minimizing Risk for Nursing Home Managers*, 2006, HCPro, [www.hcpro.com](http://www.hcpro.com), search for Accello.

**Patricia Iyer has become one of 15 certified legal nurse investigators worldwide. Certified by the LNI Institute, Iyer has gained advanced skills in investigation of medical record analysis for fraud and working with private investigators. These skills are of value to attorneys, insurances companies, and managed care**