

Breaking Ground in the Treatment of Retinal Diseases

It is an exciting time to be a retina specialist. In the last few months, we have seen important advancements in the treatment of neovascular age-related macular degeneration (AMD) as well as diabetic retinopathy (DR).

With regard to the former, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced in June that it approved ranibizumab (Lucentis; Genentech, San Francisco) for the treatment of the so-called *wet* AMD. As Eugene de Juan, MD, president of the American Society of Retina Specialists said, "The Lucentis approval stands out as one of the most important medical developments in ophthalmology during my 25 years in the field because it has the potential to reverse vision loss associated with wet AMD."

With regard to the latter, DR, the FDA recently sent an approvable letter to Eli Lilly and Company (Indianapolis) for ruboxistaurin. The agent is in development for the treatment of moderate-to-severe nonproliferative DR. An approval is expected before the end of the year, according to the company.

Hopefully, these newly available and soon-

to-come treatments will help supply specialists with increased confidence in their practice patterns. Often, the use of common therapies for retinal diseases is based on anecdotal evidence rather than clinical trial data, and there are always concerns and risks associated with off-label uses.

Another reason for optimism among both specialists and patients, is that ranibizumab and ruboxistaurin each represent advances in agents that target specific molecular entities.

Ranibizumab controls the formation of new blood vessels, and ruboxistaurin inhibits the molecular path-

way associated with protein kinase C-beta. Research to find drugs that act along recently discovered disease pathways is clearly thriving.

These and other emerging agents that are being investigated in clinical trials and discussed at medical meetings across the globe offer much needed hope to our aging population. This is a population that is also suffering from the consequences of the diabetes epidemic.

Perhaps we are closing in on a time when blindness associated with common retinal diseases will be a worry of the past. ■



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Conni Bergmann Koury". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'C' at the beginning.

Conni Bergmann Koury
Editor-in-Chief