

New vitamin pill against blindness

Anti-oxidant aims to slow sight loss suffered by 63,000 Scots

ALAN MacDERMID

A NEW supplement carrying an anti-oxidant that staves off blindness has been launched in Scotland.

The multi-vitamin will tackle a steep decline in the average consumption of lutein, which has fallen by half since the Second World War.

According to leading ophthalmologist Professor Ian Grierson, wartime rationing

provided two-thirds of the required level of lutein compared to today's diets.

He was speaking at the launch in Scotland of the new supplement containing the ingredient, together with omega-3 and vitamins that slow the progress of macular degeneration.

Age-related macular degeneration, AMD, is thought to affect about 63,000 Scots,

leading to a large blind spot in the centre of the eye. Sufferers find it increasingly difficult to read, eat or recognise people and are at risk of falling down stairs.

AMD is the leading cause of blindness in the developed world and affects the macula, an area at the back of the eye. It happens when the cells that scavenge the area fall down on the job and a lot of debris builds up - known as "dry" AMD, the most common form.

This can progress to "wet" AMD, when blood vessels start growing out of control

and leaking. This is rarer but much more rapid and serious. Risk factors include poor diet, smoking, obesity, high blood pressure and excessive exposure to short-wave light and advancing age. Women and Caucasians are also more vulnerable, and a family history is also a risk factor.

Research has already shown that supplements containing vitamins C and E, and also zinc, can slow the progress from dry to wet, and a number of products containing these have been marketed.

A more recent study has shown protective effects

'There are a lot of people out there who would benefit from supplements'

from lutein and zeaxanthin, which as carotenoids help to provide a filter in front of the macula to protect it against light damage.

The new additives also act as anti-oxidants, scavenging the free radicals that accumulate around the macula in AMD.

All have been included in a new vitamin supplement, Ocuvit Complete, launched by the optical company Bausch and Lomb.

Mr Grierson said: "The recommended daily intake of lutein for normal health is 6mg, and during the war the average intake was 4mg. Powdered egg was a good source. Now it is down to 2mg."

Mr Grierson said that a diet rich in oily fish, fruit and vegetables like carrots and peppers could make a difference - but he takes supplements too.

He said: "I am all in favour

of a good diet but the reality is we don't have a good diet nowadays."

"There are certainly a lot of people out there who would benefit from the supplements. They cost £15 a month, which is cheap if they are doing you some good, but it is still a hole in the budget and you have to weigh it up."

"If you are 30 and have a good diet the answer is probably no."

"But if you are 40-50, have a lousy diet, a relative with AMD, or one or two other risk factors, then it would be well worth thinking about."

Sitcom's child stars nominated for comedy awards

FAMILY comedy Outnumbered is leading the way at this year's British Comedy Awards, with five nominations including three for its young stars.

Stand-up comics Michael McIntyre and Alan Carr will also have high hopes for the ceremony, with three nominations apiece.

BBC1's Outnumbered, which has been hailed by critics for its innovative, partly improvised style and believable performances, has earned newcomer nominations for all three of the show's child actors.

Claire Skinner, who plays their middle-class mother Sue Brockman, is up for best comedy actress, while the show also features in the best sitcom category, vying with Channel 4's Peep Show, starring David Mitchell and Robert Webb, and The IT Crowd.

Webb is in the running for best comedy actor and has a further chance to pick up an award for That Mitchell And Webb Look, which is nominated for best sketch show.

McIntyre and Carr will go head to head with Harry Hill in the best comedy entertainment personality and entertainment programme categories.

Hill's TV Burp scooped the best comedy entertainment gong last year, while Carr won the entertainment personality award.

McIntyre is nominated for best live stand-up this year, while Alan Carr: Chatty Man is also up for best new British TV comedy.

Sacha Baron Cohen's controversial film Bruno, as a gay Austrian fashion expert, and In The Loop, the movie spin-off of the BBC's dark political comedy The Thick Of It, are both up for best film.

Pulling, BBC3's comedy about three hard-drinking thirtysomething women, which was axed after two series, is up for best television comedy drama.

Two of the show's stars, Rebekah Staton and Tanya Franks, are also in the running for best female newcomer.

Harry Enfield and Paul Whitehouse have earned a nomination for the second series of their sketch show, while last year's comedy panel show winner QI will battle it out with Have I Got News For You and Mock The Week.

The awards ceremony will air on ITV1 and ITV2 on Saturday, December 12.

Plans drawn up to link the legacies of a city's greatest two architects

EXCLUSIVE

GRAEME MURRAY

AMBITIOUS plans have been unveiled for a thoroughfare that would finally link the legacies of Glasgow's greatest architects - Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Alexander "Greek" Thomson.

The Mackintosh-Thomson Mews would run from Thomson's Egyptian Halls in Union Street to Mackintosh's hidden jewel, The Lighthouse, in Mitchell Lane.

Union Street Properties, which is behind the plan, believes it would increase awareness of both architectural treasures and create vibrant commercial shopping and leisure space opposite the Union Street entrance to Central Station.

The move would involve creating a shopping and parking centre using NCP's Mitchell Street car park.

It also depends on the first phase of the Egyptian Halls being completed and either a retailer or hotel operator occupying the historic halls,

which have lain empty for decades.

Derek Souter, of Dundee-based Union Street Properties, said: "Already there is quite strong interest in the Egyptian Halls. However, there is a one-off opportunity to think out of the box and speculate whether Thomson's architectural masterpiece can be merged with NCP's Mitchell Street car park to create a new, combined retail and car parking asset."

"We can create a thoroughfare from Union Street through to NCP's car park in Mitchell Street."

"The fusion of the NCP car park and the Egyptian Halls pivots around this new architectural entity to The Lighthouse, and to Mitchell Lane, which exits on to Buchanan Street, Glasgow's prime shopping area."

The Lighthouse, which was designed by Mackintosh as a home to the then Glasgow Herald, is facing a battle for survival after a cash crisis.

Culture Minister Michael Russell said yesterday he was committed to basing an architecture centre in the building



Two giants of Scottish architecture

Alexander "Greek" Thomson

- Born in 1817 in Balfour, Stirling-shire, he was the ninth of 12 children.
- He married Jane Nicholson in 1847 and had 12 children, but later lost five of them to an epidemic.
- He developed his own highly idiosyncratic style from Greek, Egyptian and Levantine sources.

- He was an elder of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland.
- His Glasgow buildings include three of the world's celebrated Romantic Classical churches - the Caledonia Road Free Church, Queen's Park United Presbyterian Church and St Vincent Street Church - and the Egyptian Halls, above left.

Charles Rennie Mackintosh

- Born in Glasgow on June 7, 1868, the fourth of 11 children.
- He met fellow artist Margaret MacDonald at the Glasgow School of Art. The two married in 1900.
- His first grand architectural project was the design of the Glasgow Herald Building, above right, in 1893.

- His designs gained in popularity following his death in 1928.
- His House for an Art Lover was built in Glasgow's Bellahouston Park in 1906.
- The Glasgow School of Art building, erected between 1897 and 1909, is regularly cited as among the finest buildings in the UK.

and that staff would transfer their employment from The Lighthouse Trust to Architecture and Design Scotland.

USP has invested £5.5 million into restoring the Egyptian Halls and has also now started marketing the historic building to potential occupiers.

Talks have been held with NCP about the Mackintosh-Thomson Mews blueprint, which is now being given more consideration.

No lane currently exists between Union Street and Mitchell Lane but developers believe the move would bring together Glasgow's most

famous architects in a project that could benefit all parties involved and help regenerate a down-at-heel Union Street.

The bold proposals could also see the creation of a landmark meeting place or 'Lightbox' on Buchanan Street, which would mark the entrance to the new mews.

Mr Souter added: "Outline discussions have been held with NCP over the past few years and they would now be revisited."

It is claimed a re-modernised NCP car park at the rear of Egyptian Halls and the creation of the mews would increase aware-

ness of The Lighthouse and help it achieve commercial sustainability.

Car park operator NCP yesterday confirmed it was investigating the feasibility of USP's proposals.

A spokeswoman said: "NCP recognises this opportunity and we are looking into it."

'Slow learner' Susan Boyle bullied and beaten at school

BRITAIN'S Got Talent star Susan Boyle has revealed she was bullied at school and beaten by teachers who were ignorant about children with learning disabilities.

In her first interview since finishing her debut album, I Dreamed A Dream, Boyle, 48, said: "You're looking at someone who would get the belt every day. 'Will you shut up, Susan!' - whack!"

She continued: "I was a slow learner. I'm just a wee bit slower at picking things up than other people. So you get left behind in a system that just wants to rush on, you know? That was what I felt was happening to me."

She added: "But it's all very different now. I think teachers are taught to understand children with learning disabilities a lot better."

Referring to being bullied at school, she said: "There's nothing worse than another person having power over you by bullying and not knowing how to get rid of that thing."

Boyle also described how she used her faith to cope with the death of her mother Bridget in 2007.

She said: "That's what keeps you going. I have my faith, which is the backbone of who I am, really."

The former church worker from Blackburn, West



SUSAN BOYLE: Debut album looks set to sell 100,000 copies.

Lothian, became an unlikely international superstar after appearing on Britain's Got Talent earlier this year.

Global sales of her album, which will be released next week, are expected to be in excess of 100,000.

Online neologism 'unfriend' is dictionary word of the year

"UNFRIEND" has been named the word of the year by the New Oxford American Dictionary, chosen from a list of finalists with a tech-savvy bent.

Unfriend was defined as a verb that means to remove someone as a friend on a social networking site such as Facebook.

"It has both currency and potential longevity," said Christine Lindberg, senior lexicographer for Oxford.

"In the online social networking context, its meaning is understood, so its adoption as a modern verb form makes this an interesting choice for word of the year."

Other words deemed finalists for 2009 by the dictionary's publisher, Oxford University Press, came from other technological trends, the economy, and political and current affairs.

In technology, there was "hashtag", which is the hash sign added to a word or phrase that lets Twitter users search for tweets similarly tagged; "intoxicated" for when people are distracted by texting while driving, and "sexting", which is the sending of sexually explicit SMS messages and pictures by mobile phone.

Finalists from the economy included "freemium", mean-

ing a business model in which some basic services are provided for free, and "funemployed", referring to people taking advantage of newly unemployed status to have fun or pursue other interests.

In the political and current affairs section, finalists included "birther", meaning conspiracy theorists challenging President Barack Obama's US birth certificate, and "choice mom", a person who chooses to be a single mother.

Novelty words making the shortlist were "deleb", meaning a dead celebrity, and "tramp stamp", referring to a tattoo on the lower back.

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Town first in the UK to make WiFi free for all

AN English town is to become the first in the UK to provide free wireless internet access to all its residents, it has been revealed.

Swindon, in Wiltshire, will be covered by a "WiFi mesh" offering blanket internet coverage for its 186,000 citizens, the council said.

The £1 million project will be funded by a mixture of public and private money, but it hopes to break into profit with residents subscribing to faster, paid-for access above the free service.

Some 1400 secure access points will be fitted around Swindon, similar to those used in homes.

The borough council worked with local business-

man Rikki Hunt, who came up with the concept, and digital technology firm aQovia to create a new company - Digital City UK.

Under the brand name Signal, it will roll out the technology throughout the town. Line rental is free and there is no connection charge. The public will be able to access the internet and download e-mails without charge but usage will be limited.

Anti-virus software and popular services offered by Microsoft and Google will all be on the network.

There are also plans to deliver information such as real-time details on home electricity usage and air quality monitoring.

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