

June 9, 2010

**LUCENTIS NOW AVAILABLE TO MANITOBANS
AT NO COST**

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**Access Expanded Through Retinal Specialists' Offices
Ahead of Schedule: Oswald**

Manitobans suffering from wet macular degeneration now have even greater access to the drug Lucentis to prevent and reverse eye damage, Health Minister Theresa Oswald announced today.

"In March, we announced Manitoba Health would be covering Lucentis treatment through the Misericordia Eye Centre of Excellence as of June 1 with the intention of expanding access to other retinal specialists' offices in the future," said Oswald. "Today we are pleased to announce that Lucentis is now accessible through doctors' offices ahead of schedule."

Wet macular degeneration is a disease that can impair vision and cause blindness. Lucentis has been available at no cost to Manitobans with wet macular degeneration since June 1 through an expansion of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Eye Program, which includes the Misericordia Eye Care Centre of Excellence and the offices of Manitoba retinal specialists.

The minister noted there is no deductible or cost for patients to access Lucentis through the new program, which means Manitoba now has the most affordable access to Lucentis in the country.

"Misericordia Health Centre is excited to be able to offer Manitobans the new Lucentis treatment," says Rosie Jacuzzi, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority ophthalmology lead and MHC president and chief operating officer. "Misericordia is implementing this innovative model of delivery – putting patients first by co-ordinating directly with retinal specialists to provide access to Lucentis to those in need."

Since Lucentis coverage was announced in March, the province has worked with Manitoba retinal specialists so that Lucentis will be used appropriately, while keeping the cost to the provincial health system affordable, said Oswald. Manitoba Health estimates up to 1,000 patients could benefit from this new program annually.

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