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## News | Ottawa and Region

### Ottawa scientist heads \$1.4M blindness study

By DOUG HEMPSTEAD, OTTAWA SUN

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A University of Ottawa researcher will lead a team from Canada and the U.S. on a five-year, \$1.4M collaborative project to develop a new gene therapy to prevent blindness due to retinal diseases.

The six-member research team is led by Dr. Catherine Tsilfidis, Senior Scientist at the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute and

associate professor in the faculty of medicine at the University of Ottawa.

"The goal of this project is to begin testing a new gene therapy in patients, who are losing their vision due to retinal disease, by the end of five years," said Dr. Tsilfidis. "This is an ambitious goal, but we think it is achievable."

The retina is the inner lining of the eye that is responsible for sensing light. Millions of people in North America suffer from diseases that involve the retina, such as retinitis pigmentosa, glaucoma, retinal ischemia and age-related macular degeneration. Although the causes of these diseases are different, they all end the same way: blindness.

Funding for the project is provided through the Foundation Fighting Blindness and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research by Scotiabank and a private donor.

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