

## From: Her Desk Drawer

### Chunky Tomato Salsa

*Plant a Row • Grow a Row is a Canada-wide program that encourages gardeners to donate their extra fruit and vegetables to those in need. To help support the program, Dr. Roberta Bondar, the world's first neurologist in space, has shared a favourite vegetable recipe that we thought you would love to try.*

- 4 .....Tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1/2 .....Cucumber, chopped
- 2 .....Green onions, chopped
- 1 .....Green or red pepper, chopped
- 1 clove ...Garlic, crushed
- 2 tbsp ....Vegetable oil
- 1 tbsp ....Red wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp ....Lemon juice
- 1 tsp .....Salt
- 1/4 tsp ...Pepper
- 2 drops ...Hot pepper sauce
- 1/4 cup ...Chopped fresh parsley



In a medium-sized bowl, combine tomatoes, cucumber, onions, green or red pepper and garlic. Whisk together oil, vinegar, lemon juice, salt, pepper and hot pepper sauce. Pour over vegetable mixture and combine gently. At serving time, add parsley. Can be stored in refrigerator for up to four days.



**PROJECT LIFESAVER** – Doreen Broadbent, the director of operations for Project Lifesaver, left, poses with (L-R) Ontario Provincial Police Const. Janet Hayes; Diane Landry from the Royal Bank in Belle River; Mark Lassaline, the husband of Laurie Lassaline, the winner of a draw to raise money for Project Lifesaver; Victoria Beaulieu, the chairman of the organization; and Lakeshore OPP Community Policing Office Const. Karen Gignac-Trudell. A draw at the bank Sept. 1 raised \$500 for the organization that gives tracking devices to patients suffering from Alzheimer's or autism. With a tracking device police can find Alzheimer's or autistic patients who wander away from home.

## Wet Macular Degeneration Treatment Options

In last month's article I discussed dry macular degeneration and the treatment options available. This month I will present an overview of past, present, and future treatment options for wet macular degeneration.

Wet macular degeneration (MD) makes up ten percent of all cases of MD. It is more



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severe than dry MD. It is characterized by the development of new blood vessels in the macula. These new blood vessels are poorly constructed and consequently will result in extensive bleeding inside the eye. Central vision loss occurs more rapidly and more severely.

Prior to year 2000, wet

MD was treated with macular laser photocoagulation. This was effective in reducing the amount of further blood leakage. However, it resulted in a lot of collateral damage to surrounding retinal tissue leaving a patient with even worse vision after treatment.

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) using Visudyne was made available in 2000. This treatment proved to be more effective than macular laser photocoagulation. PDT involves injecting Visudyne (a UV-light sensitive drug) into the bloodstream where it travels to the blood vessels of the macula. The ophthalmologist then applies UV light to the eye causing only the leaky blood vessels to form clots which seals these abnormal blood vessels. The main advantage of PDT was that it did not cause collateral damage that was so com-

mon with macular laser photocoagulation. For the first time with wet MD treatment, some patients (up to 6%) experience some vision improvement with PDT. Still 30-40% of PDT patients will experience further vision deterioration after treatment.

New wet MD treatments are focusing on a blood vessel growth factor known as vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF). VEGF works by promoting the growth of these new and immature blood vessels. These new drugs are injected into the eyeball and bind to VEGF to inhibit its activity. This new class of drugs is called anti-VEGF drugs.

Macugen, Avastin and Lucentis (presently available only in the U.S.A.) are three of the anti-VEGF drugs available. They are administered with injections directly

into the eye every four to six weeks for one to two years. Early results have been very promising. It is difficult to know which of the three are most effective since there have been no comparison studies done at this time. Avastin is very interesting since it is approved for the treatment of patients with metastatic colorectal cancer. The risk factors for these new drugs are small (approximately 1/10000) but include retinal detachment, intraocular lens injury and endophthalmitis (severe infection of the inside of the eyeball).

The treatment of wet macular degeneration is changing rapidly. For the first time patients and doctors now have options when it comes to the treatment of wet MD.

I would like to thank Dr. Tom Sheidow, a London ophthalmologist, for assistance in writing this article.

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