



# **Animal Models for the Study of Human Disease: Chapter 5. Animal Models of Age-Related Macular Degeneration**

*Caroline J. Zeiss*

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Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a degenerative condition that begins in Bruch's membrane and progresses to involve the retinal pigment epithelium and ultimately, overlying photoreceptors. The only required etiologic factor is age, and AMD is regarded as the leading cause of blindness in individuals over 65 years. AMD results from variable contributions of age, environment, and genetic predisposition. Many loci are linked to AMD—in the vast majority of cases, the disease is associated with polymorphisms within these genes, rather than mutations that ablate gene function. The etiologic complexity of AMD is reflected by the paucity of animal models that entirely replicate the human disease. In this review, we compare the salient anatomy of the primate and rodent retina, particularly in the light of AMD pathology. Next, prevailing hypotheses explaining how AMD may develop are discussed. These include the role of complement activation and macrophage chemotaxis in AMD, molecular mechanisms of choroidal neovascularization, and the roles of oxidative damage and lipid metabolism. An overview of spontaneous and induced non-human primate models is given, and relevant mouse models are described in the context of each pathogenetic mechanism.

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