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- **Private Funding Makes a Difference in Translational Research**
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**PRIVATE FUNDING MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH**

Private funds often come without the “strings” of government grants. The average age at which researchers receive their first NIH grant is 43. Private grants often help support younger scientists — the average age at which most private grants are awarded is 31. Large gifts can jumpstart new areas of research neglected by federal dollars or help fund projects that may not have the broad public impact of a federal grant.

Karen L. Semans, deputy director, is right when she says: “The uncertainty puts an even bigger eye on the private funding of research. There remains a big question on what the new administration means for future funding. President Barack Obama signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 in December, which included increases in spending for the National Institutes of Health and other entities. The NIH is the largest source of funding for the 137,000 researchers in the U.S. The increases were 1.8 percent for the fiscal year 2016. That’s good news for research on eye-related diseases, but also raises the question of where the additional funding is coming from.”

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**MUSHROOMS AND GLAUCOMA**

Glaucoma is a disease that causes damage to the major nerve of the eye — the optic nerve — a part of the central nervous system that carries visual information from the eye to the brain. Glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness worldwide.

Glaucoma is characterized by an imbalance of the fluid produced in the eye and the amount of fluid drained. Over time, elevated IOP can cause vision loss. In 2016, 1.2 million Americans were blind or had vision impairments from glaucoma. The condition affects people of all races and ages but is more common among African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans. Glaucoma is a leading cause of vision loss among African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans.

**An Excerpt from**

**Translational Research**

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DEF, because her husband, Arnold, has keratoconus.

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