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Hope of blindness cure
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A NEW treatment for the main causes of sight loss in the UK could be available within five years, scientists said yesterday.

Experts have found that a special type of cell in the eye, known as a Muller glial, could play a huge role in repairing retinal damage.

Diseases which damage the retina, such as macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetes, account for three quarters of registered blindness in the UK.

Researchers at University College London and Moorfields Eye Hospital found Muller cells had stem cell properties and could be developed for retinal use.

In tests using rats, the Muller cells migrated into the retina and took on the characteristics of the surrounding neurons.

Dr Astrid Limb, who led the research, said: "Our findings have enormous potential.

"It may be possible to store cells in a cell bank and transplant them into the eye or to use cells from a person's own eye."

The Royal National Institute of Blind People cautiously welcomed the study and said hundreds of thousands of Brits could benefit from the treatment.

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