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Newsroom Podcast: Road to Resilience

Title: Seeing the Light

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Professional voice coach Susan Baum shares how a debilitating hereditary diagnosis led her to self-advocate, garner miraculous results through a clinical trial, and regain her vision and independence.

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1. Same as: <https://www.mountsinai.org/about/newsroom/podcasts/seeing-the-light>

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<Intro Text>

When Susan Baum was diagnosed with Age-related macular degeneration, the news landed with unusual force: She had already watched the disease reshape the lives of close family members, narrowing mobility, independence, and daily confidence.

Instead of accepting her relatives' fate, Baum pushed deeper into research until she found a promising path forward: red light treatment newly introduced through New York Eye and Ear Infirmary.

In this conversation, Susan shares how measurable improvements came quickly, why she chose to speak publicly despite being intensely private, and how resilience sometimes means refusing passive acceptance when new approaches and innovations may change the outcome.

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Stephen Calabria: [00:00:00] From the Mount Sinai Health System in New York City, this is Road to Resilience, a podcast about facing adversity. I'm your host, Stephen Calabria, Mount Sinai's, director of Podcasting.

On this episode, we welcome Susan Baum, a New York City based voice teacher, diagnosed with age-related macular degeneration, a progressive and potentially debilitating vision disorder.

Susan's long family history with the diagnosis, set the stage for her own. Then a clinical trial gave her new hope-- and a fresh eye on the future. We're honored to welcome Susan Baum to the show.

Susan Baum, welcome to Road to Resilience.

Susan Baum: Oh, thank you.

Stephen Calabria: Now Susan, your father and sister both lived with AMD. To kick us off, what is AMD?

Susan Baum: Age related macular degeneration. It destroys the central vision in your eye by cell [00:01:00] death, essentially in the macula and other parts of the eye to, from what I understand, but it is the leading cause of blindness in adults over 65 or even maybe 55, but certainly 65.

Stephen Calabria: Does the process hurt?

Susan Baum: No, not at all. It's not painful. It's just slow vision loss. And neither does glaucoma or any number of eye diseases, have no pain or anything like that. So it sneaks up on you.

Stephen Calabria: So your father and sister both lived with it? How did they

Susan Baum: Well, my father is passed. He started showing signs of it when he was in his fifties and maybe even earlier. My brother and I were talking about it, and he'd been a pilot. And he was flying and he suddenly got double vision and they grounded him.

And we think that may have been the beginning of his eye problems, but my [00:02:00] brother noticed it, particularly in his fifties. He was playing tennis with him one night and he couldn't hit a ball to save his life.