

I WILL. An extraordinary challenge for Glaucoma UK's 50th anniversary

BY JOANNE CREIGHTON



Image courtesy of Martin Higgins / Glaucoma UK.



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As we celebrate our 50th anniversary year, we are reaching out to our glaucoma community, inviting everyone to join us in the fight against glaucoma so we won't need to exist as a charity in 50 years' time.

Since the start of this year, we've been asking members, supporters and the public to consider making a pledge beginning with "I will..." This might be anything from "I will raise money for Glaucoma UK by running a marathon" to "I will talk to my family about the importance of regular eye tests."

One of our members and fundraisers, Martin Higgins, a distinguished former member of the RAF Red Arrows, is taking on an epic challenge to run 1000 miles from Land's End to John o' Goats.

In 2003, Martin was shocked to learn of his increased intraocular pressures during a routine eye examination. "While I'm used to soaring far above the clouds in a fast jet as a former Red Arrow, on the ground, you're most likely to find me diligently applying my glaucoma eye drops every day at my home in Buckinghamshire." Luckily, regular eye checks and daily eye drops kept him in the air. He soon became aware of the shortfalls in funding for glaucoma research.

Glaucoma UK's Pitts Crick Career Development Fellowship (named after the charity's founder, Ronald Pitts Crick) is a three-year post-doctoral research fellowship which will be awarded to help mark the charity's golden jubilee anniversary. We hope the selected researcher will go on to play a pivotal role in transforming glaucoma diagnosis or treatment into the future.

Martin is determined to raise £50,000 towards our ambitious plans for the Pitts Crick Research Fellowship appeal. Martin explained his motivation for taking on this challenge: "I found strength through talking to people. I was chatting to a colleague and

he told me to have a 'Why? list' – writing down a list of reasons why you're doing this. I want to help in making research possible for the many people who need it."

His other inspirations lie with the future that research could unlock. "The other 'Why?' is for my son, and the hope that this research means he doesn't have to worry. So, if this research goes on to support my son, my family, then

that's my 'Why?'" Martin's concern for his son arises from the hereditary nature of glaucoma.

You don't have to take on an epic challenge like Martin, your "I will..." may be initiating conversations about glaucoma with patients and encouraging them to talk about the disease with their families. Whatever you decide, know that you are a part of a community all making a collective difference, and we're genuinely grateful.

If you would like to contribute to his extraordinary mission, please visit Martin's Just Giving page: [justgiving.com/page/go-higgy-go](https://www.justgiving.com/page/go-higgy-go)

Alternatively, if Higgy's efforts have inspired you to take on your own fundraising challenge, please reach out to fundraising@glaucoma.uk or 01233 64 81 64.

And if you're interested to read more about our research grants, please visit:

<https://glaucoma.uk/research-hub/research-grants>

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