

PRESS RELEASE

GLAUCOMA AUSTRALIA URGES DILATED EYE EXAMS TO DETECT GLAUCOMA

Statement by Glaucoma Australia President, Associate Professor Ivan Goldberg FRANZCO AM, for World Glaucoma Week

Glaucoma Australia, in partnership with the World Glaucoma Association and the World Glaucoma Patient Association, observes World Glaucoma Week each March (10TH to 16TH March in 2013) by encouraging the Australian community at higher risk for glaucoma to undertake a comprehensive dilated eye exam and to make a habit of doing so at least every two years. While anyone can get glaucoma, people at higher risk include those with a high eye pressure, those with a family history of the disease, being of African or Asian descent and aged 40 and over, and any adult over the age of 50.

Glaucoma is a major cause of vision loss in Australia and it is becoming more prevalent as our population ages. About 300,000 Australians have primary open-angle glaucoma, the most common form, and this number is expected to grow. "The Economic Impact of Primary Open Angle Glaucoma" a report released in 2008, jointly by Centre for Eye Research Australia and Access Economics, predicts that by 2025 the prevalence of primary open-angle glaucoma will affect almost 400,000 Australians.

When the optic nerve is damaged for whatever reason, vision loss may result. Glaucoma can be detected in its early stages through a comprehensive dilated eye exam before vision loss occurs. During this exam, drops are placed in the eyes to dilate, or widen, the pupils. This assists an eye-care provider to examine the optic nerve for signs of damage and other possible problems. An eye pressure test alone is not enough to detect glaucoma. People in the higher risk categories should not wait until they notice a problem with their vision to have an eye exam. Primary open-angle glaucoma often has no symptoms in its early stages, so people may not know they have glaucoma until they start to have noticeable vision loss.

Glaucoma Australia is the peak glaucoma awareness, education and support association in Australia and is committed to minimising visual disability from glaucoma.

The broad scope of Glaucoma Australia-funded activities ranges from increasing community awareness, educating and supporting glaucoma patients and their families, and funding glaucoma research. As part of its education program, Glaucoma Australia develops a variety of education materials in English and other languages describing glaucoma, its diagnosis and treatment. To learn more about Glaucoma Australia, visit www.glaucoma.org.au. The website includes information on glaucoma, tips for talking with your eye care professional, and the benefits of getting a comprehensive dilated eye exam. Glaucoma Australia also develops materials for health educators to conduct educational sessions in their community about glaucoma. To order educational resources available from Glaucoma Australia, visit https://secure.ciau.biz/glaucoma_org_au/ssl/resources.asp?style=0.

About Glaucoma Australia:

Glaucoma Australia is the peak glaucoma awareness/education/support association in Australia. It is a registered, national, not-for-profit organisation incorporated in 1988.

Glaucoma Australia's mission is *"Working to minimise sight disability from glaucoma"*.

It aims to:

1. increase community awareness of glaucoma as a potentially blinding disease and thus the need for regular eye checks;
2. provide information and support for glaucoma patients and their families, reinforcing advice and explanations given by their eye practitioner, and hopefully improving compliance with therapy;
3. develop the financial resources to fund research into glaucoma in this country;
4. enhance the already high standard of eye care with ongoing professional development of eye care professionals;
5. to consider and where identified as necessary, to advocate with government departments on behalf of improved access to care for glaucoma patients.

Its services incorporate:

- supporting those with glaucoma, their family and carers;
- patient education and awareness sessions
- dissemination of literature/information on glaucoma and specific topics
- a range of 20 language resources on glaucoma;
- support groups around Australia
- production and dissemination of Glaucoma News;
- National Awareness Campaigns to increase awareness of glaucoma.

Willing volunteers assist in much of its work.