



Media Release

Glaucoma Awareness Week campaign aims to find 150,000 Aussies who are unaware they have glaucoma

March 11, 2018 Despite being the world's leading cause of irreversible blindness, more than 10 million Aussies do not automatically think to have a simple eye exam by an optometrist or ophthalmologist which can save their sight. This means they are potentially suffering preventable but irreversible blindness.

More than 300,000 Australians have glaucoma, yet only 50% have been diagnosed, typically because they lack noticeable symptoms and haven't had a simple eye exam.

Anyone may develop glaucoma, but the incidence increases with age. About 1 in 10,000 babies are born with glaucoma, by age 40, about 1 in 200 have glaucoma, rising to 1 in 8 at age 80. Overall the incidence in Australia is about 2.3% of the population.

During World Glaucoma Week, 11 – 17 March 2018, Glaucoma Australia is encouraging relatives of those with glaucoma to have a comprehensive eye exam by an optometrist or ophthalmologist from age 40 and every 2 years ongoing.

"Blindness from glaucoma is both tragic and unacceptable as it is largely preventable and treatable" said Glaucoma Australia Ophthalmology Committee Chair Dr Simon Skalicky.

"If detected and treated early, glaucoma blindness can be avoided. Taking the time to have a comprehensive eye exam can save your sight" said Glaucoma Australia Optometry Committee Chair Dr Ben Ashby.

"Considering you are 10 times more likely to have glaucoma if you have a direct family member with glaucoma, and up to 50% more likely if their glaucoma is advanced, it is the relatives who we are reaching out to during World Glaucoma Week to be glaucoma aware and increase early detection. Our primary mission is to eliminate blindness due to glaucoma" said Glaucoma Australia CEO Annie Gibbins.

The Glaucoma Awareness campaign provides a wonderful opportunity for the eye-care professions to unite in promoting awareness, early detection, collaborative care and ongoing educational support from Glaucoma Australia. Businesses, optometrists, ophthalmologists, health professionals and people with glaucoma will be hosting a B.I.G Breakfast or event to proactively communicate this message and drive a new culture in Australian eye health awareness.

World Glaucoma Week runs from 11 – 17 March 2018.

www.glaucoma.org.au