



IAPB and Partners Focus on Glaucoma

The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), the World Glaucoma Association (WGA) and the International Centre for Eye Health (ICEH), with support from Allergan, launch “Focus On: Glaucoma”, a new initiative to mark World Glaucoma Week 2019.

Immediate release: This World Glaucoma Week (10-16 March, 2019) IAPB is partnering with international organizations and experts in glaucoma care to draw a spotlight on the third leading cause of blindness. Through a new initiative, “[Focus on: Glaucoma](#)”, they will draw a spotlight on blindness due to glaucoma, which is irreversible. Indeed, glaucoma can be considered an important “neglected eye disease”. The initiative will hold series of activities during the week, including four webinars covering different time-zones, and a number of blog-posts from glaucoma experts from around the world.

The highlight of the initiative will be a [high-profile lecture on 12 March, 2019](#) at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in London. The Lecture will host Prof Sir Peng Khaw, Dr Winifred Nolan and Ms Jess Blijkers, who will be presenting on the complications of glaucoma, glaucoma care in developing countries and the critical need to scale up glaucoma services in Sub-saharan Africa. Sir Peng Khaw is a world authority on glaucoma in adults and children. Dr Nolan specializes in glaucoma care and delivery especially in low-income populations. Both are senior consultants at Moorfields Eye Hospital, London. Ms Jess Blijkers is Eye Health Programme Manager at Light For The World, one of the few international NGOs with a glaucoma programme.

All are welcome to attend the lecture (please visit iapb.org/WGW2019 for more details).

In 2015, nearly 3 million people were blind due to glaucoma, and 4 million had moderate to severe vision impairment. Estimates suggest that nearly 80 million people will be living with some [form of glaucoma](#) by 2020. Many people with glaucoma are not diagnosed until they have become completely blind, particularly in Africa.

Glaucoma is a complex condition and refers to a group of conditions that result in optic nerve damage and visual field loss. Eye health systems that provide comprehensive eye care must include a programmatic approach to diagnosing and treating glaucoma around the world. As the third leading cause of blindness and a major cause of vision impairment, glaucoma care and delivery needs to be a part of our strategies to deliver universal health coverage. The IAPB alliance urges planners to include glaucoma care as part of their eye health plans. World Glaucoma Week (10-16 March 2019) is a great



opportunity to discuss issues, solutions and approaches to tackling glaucoma worldwide.

Different kinds of glaucoma are found in different parts of the world. To engender conversations and discussions around the world, IAPB will be [organizing webinars covering different time-zones](#) during World Glaucoma Week. IAPB will also be publishing blog-posts from around the world during the week. For more information on how to register for the webinars, and to read the blog posts, please visit iapb.org/wgw2019 for more details.

“Glaucoma is a major cause of blindness and vision impairment, and we need a collaborative strategy to tackle it”, said **Joanna Conlon, Director of Development and Communications, IAPB**. “Glaucoma constitutes an important public health concern, and addressing it is crucial to delivering universal health coverage. IAPB is delighted to bring together some of the best minds in glaucoma care and delivery, to kick-start these conversations.”

“Allergan is delighted to support this important campaign”, said **Montu Sumra, Executive Medical Director at Allergan**. “At Allergan, challenging glaucoma is a key area of focus. We believe that strong partnerships and cross-linkages will play a crucial role in drawing attention to this complex group of conditions.”

Prof Sir Peng Tee Khaw said, “Glaucoma is the major cause of irreversible blindness around the world, and the numbers are projected to increase exponentially in both the developed and developing world. Research and new innovative approaches from rapid assessment to novel therapies will be required to prevent unnecessary blindness from glaucoma worldwide in the next few decades.”

“In many parts of the world 80-90% of glaucoma remains undiagnosed and patients often present with irreversible severe visual impairment”, said **Dr Winifred Nolan, Consultant Ophthalmologist, Glaucoma Service, Moorfields Eye Hospital, London**. “Adherence to treatment may be poor due to lack of understanding of the disease and other factors including cost and fear of intervention. Recent epidemiological studies show a high prevalence of glaucoma and glaucoma blindness in Sub-Saharan Africa. This will become a significant public health burden in the next 10-20 years unless strategies are developed to deal with the problem now”.

Jess Blijkers, Programme Manager, Light for The World, said, “As an NGO working in Sub-Saharan Africa, we see the critical need to scale up glaucoma services. We have a duty to support Ministries of Health and partners to address the glaucoma challenge if we want to continue talking about “comprehensive” eye health.”



“Glaucoma is a complex disease which presents challenges for control across the world, but particularly in low income countries”, said **Clare Gilbert, Director of the International Centre for Eye Health**. “ICEH is delighted to be working with IAPB and WGA to draw a spotlight on this eye condition which is often neglected by eye care planners, by bringing together some of the best minds in public health glaucoma care for World Glaucoma Week 2019”.

“As the leading cause of irreversible blindness in the world, glaucoma remains a devastating affliction of our times, and is growing in the number of people who are affected”, noted **Shan Lin, Executive Vice President of the World Glaucoma Association**. “Prevention and early treatment of glaucoma are key aspects in combating this disease. The World Glaucoma Association is dedicated to the eradication of glaucoma through education, research, and advocacy. IAPB has been a committed partner in educating the public to get tested and thus helping to stop glaucoma from causing more and more blindness in our communities across the globe”.

Key facts

- 36 million people are blind
- 217 million people have moderate or severe distance vision impairment (MSVI)
- Of those with blindness and MSVI, 124 million people have uncorrected refractive errors and 65 million have cataract—more than 75% of all blindness and MSVI is avoidable. Glaucoma is the third major cause of blindness, and a major cause for vision impairment among adults.
- 1.1 billion people with near-vision impairment
- The prevalence of blindness and vision impairment combined has dropped from 4.58% in 1990 to 3.37% in 2015.
- 89% of vision impaired people live in low and middle-income countries
- 55% of moderate or severely vision impaired people are women



Notes to Editors:

About IAPB

The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) is the coordinating membership organisation leading international efforts in blindness prevention activities. IAPB's mission is to eliminate the main causes of avoidable blindness and visual impairment by bringing together governments and non-governmental agencies to facilitate the planning, development and implementation of sustainable national eye care programmes.

For more information, please visit: www.iapb.org

About ICEH

The International Centre for Eye Health (ICEH) works to improve eye health and eliminate avoidable visual impairment and blindness through research, education and providing technical support to programs with a focus on low-income populations. ICEH was established in 1980 and has been at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine since 2002.

For more information, please visit: <http://iceh.lshtm.ac.uk>

About WGA

The World Glaucoma Association (WGA), was founded as an independent, impartial, ethical, global organization for glaucoma science and care.

For more information, please visit: <https://wga.one/>

About Allergan

As a leader in eye care, Allergan has discovered, developed, and delivered some of the most innovative products in the industry over the last 70 years. Allergan has launched over 125 eye care products and invested billions of dollars in new treatments for the most prevalent eye conditions including glaucoma, ocular surface disease, and retinal diseases such as diabetic macular edema and retinal vein occlusion. Its eye care pipeline includes 13 additional agents for multiple ocular conditions.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.allergan.com>