



Ohio's Aging Eye Public Private Partnership

A statewide collaboration preparing for the growth of aging eye challenges in Ohio

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Summit Focuses on the Growing Threat of Blindness and Vision Loss from Age-Related Macular Degeneration

CLEVELAND – Today vision researchers will join hands with patient advocate groups at the Aging Eye Summit which will focus on Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD). The Summit is being held in Cleveland at The InterContinental Hotel and Conference Center from 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Over 120 vision researchers, clinicians, patients, public health and rehabilitation professionals, aging network professionals, bio-science funders & leaders from government and the bio-tech industry are participating. The Summit Series is presented by The Cole Eye Institute-The Cleveland Clinic, Ohio's Aging Eye Public Private Partnership, The AMD Initiative for Prevention and Cure, and Prevent Blindness Ohio.

Topics will address the growing threat of blindness and vision loss from AMD and will include: AMD and the scope of the problem, patient testimonials, lifestyle choices and other risk factors for AMD, current management strategies for AMD, innovations in AMD diagnostic and monitoring, the future of AMD- Therapeutics, Prevention of AMD.

AMD, a serious eye disease that affects the vision of more than 1.5 million Americans and 71,000 Ohioans, is the leading cause of visual impairment among those ages 50 and older. AMD robs people of their central vision and often the ability to read a book, recognize a face, drive an automobile, see fine details, or distinguish some colors, which greatly limits personal independence.

The most frightening aspect of the disease is that it progresses painlessly, with many patients not aware they are developing a problem. AMD patients slowly begin to lose their central vision which can eventually lead to permanent vision loss. Unfortunately, once symptoms begin to appear, vision loss has already occurred. And, if left untreated, studies show that those diagnosed with "wet" AMD (a more rapidly progressing condition than "dry" AMD) may become functionally blind within two years.

In a recent report issued in the Archives of Ophthalmology, researchers found that as a nation, Americans spend \$35.4 billion related to visual disorders, including medical expenses and loss of productivity. Of that number, \$575 million was directly attributed to AMD costs. Alarming, because of the extremely large aging population, the number of AMD cases is estimated to balloon in the very near future, potentially creating a devastating financial impact.

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But AMD doesn't just take its toll on the eyes. It also has proven to be not only a financial burden, but can affect the patient's mental health as well. A study from AMD Alliance International concluded that AMD patients suffer higher rates of depression and report a profoundly negative impact on their quality of life. Patients, who lose their ability to drive, read a newspaper or even see the faces of their loved ones can begin to feel a significant loss of independence which can lead to emotional distress and often depression.

Ohio's Aging Eye Public Private Partnership (AEPPP) is a statewide collaboration formed to respond to the growth aging eye challenges in Ohio. The mission of the AEPPP, an initiative supported by the Ohio Department of Aging, is to develop a strategic plan of action to address issues relating to vision care public policy, vision care services, vision education, and vision research that impact the quality of life for Ohio's seniors now and in the future.

Members of the Aging Eye Public Private Partnership are: Association of Philanthropic Homes for the Aging, Association of Area Agencies on Aging, Association of Ohio Health Commissioners, Council for Older Adults, KnowledgeWorks Foundation, Ohio Council for Home Care, Ohio Association of Gerontology and Education, Ohio Agencies Serving the Visually Impaired, NASA Glenn Research Center, Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Department of Insurance, Representative Kathleen Chandler, Ohio Nurses Association, Ohio Ophthalmological Society, Senator Steve Stivers, Senator Randy Gardner, Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission, Ohio Osteopathic Association, Ohio Optometric Association, VA Health Care System of Ohio - VISN 10, Opticians Association of Ohio and Prevent Blindness Ohio.

Visit our website at www.preventblindness.org/ohio/agingeye or call 1-800-301-2020.