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EARLY DETECTION IS KEY TO PREVENTING VISION LOSS FROM GLAUCOMA

Prevent Blindness Ohio Urges Everyone to Get an Eye Exam to Save Their Sight

COLUMBUS – For millions of Americans, the threat of vision loss is all too real. However, only half of them are aware that they have a potentially blinding eye disease. Glaucoma destroys peripheral vision and, over time, can cause blindness. The “sneak thief of sight” has no warning signs until sight has already been diminished. Once sight has been lost to glaucoma, it cannot be restored.

Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness in the world, second only to cataracts, and the leading cause of blindness in African-Americans, according to the National Institutes of Health. Left untreated, glaucoma can lead to damage of the optic nerve, visual field loss, and ultimately sight loss. It affects one in 200 people age 50 and younger and one in 10 over the age of 80.

“We urge everyone to make regular visits to their eye care professional for comprehensive eye examinations in which the pupil is dilated,” said Sherry Williams, President and CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “Many insurance policies, including Medicare, will cover glaucoma exams for qualified individuals. Don’t put off saving your vision until tomorrow. It may be too late!” added Williams.

“We can’t stress enough how vitally important it is to have regular, professional eye exams to protect your vision,” “There’s no cure for glaucoma yet, but treatment can be effective if glaucoma is detected and treated early.”

In addition to the impact that glaucoma can have on quality of life, the financial implications are significant. According to research funded by Prevent Blindness America, glaucoma costs the U.S. economy \$2.86 billion every year in direct medical costs for outpatient, inpatient and prescription drug services. Glaucoma patients between the ages of 40 and 64 years of age can expect to pay \$3,352 annually per person. For those 65 and older, the annual costs jump to \$5,243 per person. And those expenditures will only increase as medical costs continue to soar.

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Prevent Blindness Ohio has joined other leading eye care groups to build awareness during January's National Glaucoma Awareness Month to educate the public on what they can do to help save their vision. The group also provides free information on the disease through its toll-free number and through the Web at the "Glaucoma Learning Center," www.preventblindess.org/glaucoma.

"The Glaucoma Web Discussion Forum," also part of the Glaucoma Learning Center's free online services, allows patients and caregivers the opportunity to discuss online all subjects related to the disease. Topics range from general information on the condition and its treatment, to shared experiences and emotional support.

Prevent Blindness Ohio also offers free printed materials including the "Guide for People with Glaucoma." This comprehensive booklet serves as a handbook for patients and includes general information about the disease as well as information on how to administer eye drops and types of glaucoma surgery.

Everyone is at risk for developing glaucoma. However, some factors that may increase the chance of having the disease include:

- **Age** – The older you are, the greater your risk.
- **Race** – African-Americans have glaucoma four to five times more often than others. African-Americans are also likely to have glaucoma at a younger age.
- **Family history** – If you have a parent, brother or sister with glaucoma, you are more likely to get glaucoma too. If you have glaucoma, your family members should get complete eye exams.
- **Medical history** – Diabetes, previous eye injuries, eye surgery or long-term steroid use can increase your risk of glaucoma.

Prevent Blindness Ohio offers a variety of fact sheets and brochures including a glaucoma "Eye Q" quiz, a glaucoma 17-point checklist and a guide for people who have been diagnosed with the disease. Materials on glaucoma are available in both English and Spanish by calling 800-301-2020 or by visiting www.pbohio.org.

Prevent Blindness Ohio is celebrating 50 years as Ohio's leading volunteer nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight. Founded in 1957 by U.S. Senator John Bricker and Lion's Club Member, Bob Morrison with support from Nationwide, the Ohio Department of Health and Delta Gamma Fraternity, PBO serves all 88 Ohio counties. We provide direct services to more than 800,000 Ohioans annually and educate millions of consumers about what they can do to protect and preserve their precious gift of sight. Prevent Blindness Ohio is an affiliate of Prevent Blindness America, the country's second-oldest national voluntary health organization.

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PREVENT BLINDNESS AMERICA GLAUCOMA FACT SHEET

- Prevent Blindness America's *Vision Problems in the U.S.* report states that 2.2 million Americans age 40 and older or about 1.9 percent of that population have glaucoma.
- Prevent Blindness Ohio's *Vision Problems in Ohio* report states that 91,884 Ohioans age 40 and older have glaucoma.
- Prevent Blindness America's 2007 research study; "*The Economic Impact of Vision Problems*" states that glaucoma costs the U.S. economy \$2.86 billion every year in direct medical costs for outpatient, inpatient and prescription drug services.
- The same study found that glaucoma patients between the ages of 40 and 64 years of age can expect to pay \$3,352 annually per person in direct medical costs for outpatient, inpatient and prescription drug services. For those 65 and older, the annual costs jump to \$5,243 per person.
- Approximately 120,000 people are blind from glaucoma, accounting for 9-12 percent of all cases of blindness in the U.S. (National Eye Health Program/National Institutes of Health).
- It is estimated that as of 2000, at least 66.8 million people in the world have glaucoma. (Glaucoma Service Center to Prevent Blindness).
- Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the world after cataracts, (according to the World Health Organization), and the leading cause of blindness in African-Americans (according to the National Institutes of Health).
- According to the National Eye Institute, glaucoma is:
 - Five times more likely to occur in African-Americans than in whites.
 - About four times more likely to cause blindness in African-Americans than in whites.
 - Fifteen times more likely to cause blindness in African-Americans between the ages of 45-64 than in whites of the same age group.
- In the early stages, glaucoma has no symptoms, no noticeable vision loss, no pain, which is why it is called the "sneak thief of sight." By the time symptoms start to appear, some permanent damage to the eye has usually occurred.
- Glaucoma that is undiagnosed or poorly controlled can lead to damage of the optic nerve, visual field loss, and ultimately sight loss. People with glaucoma usually lose peripheral vision first. Over time, glaucoma may also damage central vision. Once lost, vision cannot be restored.
- Prevent Blindness America recommends that older people get regular, comprehensive eye exams, even if they have no signs of vision problems. The earlier glaucoma is detected, the better the chances are of preserving sight.

- Prevent Blindness America, with support from Alcon, Inc., provides “The Glaucoma Learning Center,” a comprehensive online tool to educate consumers on a variety of topics related to the disease at www.preventblindness.org/glaucoma.
- Everyone is at risk for glaucoma from young to old. Although older people are at higher risk, approximately 1 out of every 10,000 babies born in the United States is diagnosed with the disease (according to the Glaucoma Research Foundation).

Glaucoma Risk Factors

- **Age:** Those that are 40 and older are more likely to develop glaucoma. The older you are, the greater your risk.
- **Race:** People of African or Afro-Caribbean heritage are more likely to get glaucoma than the rest of the population. They are also more likely to develop glaucoma at a younger age.
- **Family History:** If you have a parent or sibling who has glaucoma, you are more likely to develop the disease.
- **Diabetes:** People with diabetes have a higher risk (40 percent) of developing glaucoma.
- **Nearsightedness:** People who are very nearsighted are at greater risk.
- **Eye Injury or Surgery:** Those who have had eye surgery or eye injuries may develop secondary glaucoma.
- **Steroid Medication:** Steroids may increase the risk of glaucoma when used for extended periods of time.

Types of Glaucoma:

Chronic (Open Angle) Glaucoma: This is the most common type. In open angle glaucoma, aqueous fluid drains too slowly and pressure inside the eye builds up. It usually results from aging of the drainage channel, which doesn’t work as well over time. However, younger people can also get this type of glaucoma.

Normal Tension Glaucoma: This is a form of open angle glaucoma not related to high pressure. People with normal tension glaucoma may be unusually sensitive to normal levels of pressure. Reduced blood supply to the optic nerve may also play a role in normal tension glaucoma.

Acute (Angle Closure) Glaucoma: This causes a sudden rise in eye pressure, requiring immediate, emergency medical care. The signs are usually serious and may include blurred vision, severe headaches, eye pain, nausea, vomiting or seeing rainbow-like halos around lights. Occasionally, the condition may be without symptoms; similar to open angle.

Secondary Glaucoma: Another 10 percent of glaucoma cases come from certain diseases and conditions that damage the eye’s drainage system. These include diabetes, leukemia, sickle-cell anemia, some forms of arthritis, cataracts, eye injuries or inflammation of the eye, steroid drug use and growth of unhealthy blood vessels.

Post-surgical Glaucoma: Some surgeries, such as retinal reattachments, increase the chance of getting glaucoma.

GLAUCOMA

:30 PSA

DID YOU KNOW THAT HALF OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE GLAUCOMA DON'T EVEN KNOW IT? THAT'S WHY IT'S CALLED THE "SNEAK THIEF OF SIGHT." ONLY AN EYE CARE PROFESSIONAL CAN TELL YOU FOR SURE. MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FOR AN EYE EXAM TODAY, FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVED ONES. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON GLAUCOMA AND GLAUCOMA TREATMENT OPTIONS, PLEASE CALL PREVENT BLINDNESS OHIO AT 800-301-2020 OR GO TO WWW.PBOHIO.ORG.

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