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CONTACT LENS SOLUTION RECALL BRINGS RARE EYE INFECTION INTO FOCUS

CHICAGO (May 30, 2007) – Based on data reporting a recent outbreak of the serious eye infection Acanthamoeba keratitis, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recently issued an official health advisory urging users of Advanced Medical Optics (AMO) Complete® MoisturePlus™ Multi-Purpose Solution to stop using the product immediately. AMO has voluntarily issued a global product recall as the investigation continues to determine the exact cause of the outbreak.

According to the CDC, the infection is caused when a microscopic organism called Acanthamoeba invades the cornea, the transparent outer covering of the eye. Without treatment, the infection can lead to scarring of the cornea and eventually, blindness.

At the age of 14, Jackie Stillmaker contracted Acanthamoeba keratitis after swimming with her contacts on and continues to suffer from the painful symptoms. She compares the pain to feeling as though she was being stabbed in the eye every few seconds. She has now undergone three corneal transplants before her 18th birthday and continues to have visual impairments.

In an effort to educate the public and to offer a support group to those who have suffered from Acanthamoeba keratitis, Mary Beth Stillmaker, Jackie's mother, has joined with Prevent Blindness America to create a free, online discussion forum. "The Acanthamoeba and Fusarium Fungal Infections and Contact Lens Use Forum" allows patients and/or parents the opportunity to discuss all subjects related to the infections, and participants are encouraged to share their own experiences.

In response to a recent increase of Acanthamoeba keratitis cases in the Chicago area, Prevent Blindness America is also funding a study through the University of Illinois at Chicago which aims to determine the source of the organisms through patient study and water analysis. The research grant was one of the five "2006 Prevent Blindness America Investigator Awards" which are presented to research projects that attempt to save sight.

"The good news is that, if diagnosed and treated early, the effects of acanthamoeba keratitis can be minimal. However, only an eye doctor can tell you if you have the infection," said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America. "We urge everyone who uses contact lenses to practice the highest level of lens care and to report any changes in vision to their eye doctor immediately."

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According to the CDC, symptoms of Acanthamoeba keratitis may include:

- Eye pain
- Eye redness
- Blurred vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensation of something in the eye
- Excessive tearing

Prevent Blindness America offers the following tips on proper contact lens care:

- Always wear contact lenses under the supervision of an eye care professional.
- Always clean and disinfect contact lenses according to instructions.
- Always store contact lenses properly in a clean storage case.
- Always use water-soluble cosmetics or those labeled safe for use with contact lenses. Do not apply skin creams or moisturizers too close to the eyes.
- Never buy contact lenses without a prescription.
- Never go to sleep while wearing cosmetic lenses.
- Never wear opaque lenses if you have any problems with night vision.
- Never share or trade your contact lenses with others.
- Remove contact lenses before any activity involving contact with water, including showering, using a hot tub or swimming.
- Seek medical attention immediately if you experience any pain, irritation, redness, blurriness or changes in your vision.

For more information on the safe use of contact lenses or to join the group's online discussion forum, please visit www.preventblindness.org or call 1-800-331-2020. For additional information on the contact lens solution product recall, please go to www.cdc.gov.

About Prevent Blindness America

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screenings, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the Web at www.preventblindness.org.

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