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## **New Report from Prevent Blindness America Shows Sharp Increase in Eye Disease Prevalence**

**- *Vision Problems in the U.S. Data Includes an 89 Percent Spike in Diabetic Eye Disease Over Last Decade* -**

**CHICAGO (June 20, 2012)** – More adult Americans are facing the reality of eye disease than ever before. According to the 2012 update of the “[Vision Problems in the U.S.](#)” report, a study released today by Prevent Blindness America and the National Eye Institute, the number of those ages 40 and older with vision impairment and blindness has increased 23 percent since the year 2000. The study, conducted by researchers from Johns Hopkins University, provides prevalence rates and estimates cases of age-related eye conditions. A full version of the study is available at [preventblindness.org/visionproblems](http://preventblindness.org/visionproblems).

In addition, a preliminary update to the 2007 Prevent Blindness America “Economic Impact of Vision Problems” report shows a \$1 billion increase in costs of excess medical care expenditures, informal care and health-related quality of life related to visual impairment and blindness. Further cost information is being developed and a full updated report on the economic impact of vision problems will be available at a later date.

Overviews of both reports will be presented today at the Prevent Blindness America “Focus on Eye Health Summit” in Washington, DC. The Summit will also feature a number of other key public health updates and presentations from national leaders, including reports on eye health surveillance efforts and NEI planning activities for vision research.

Statistics from the 2012 Vision Problems in the U.S. report on the four most common eye diseases highlight alarming increases since 2000, including:

- 2,069,403 people age 50 and older have late **AMD (age-related macular degeneration), a 25 percent increase**
- 24,409,978 million people age 40 and older have **cataracts, a 19 percent increase**
- 2,719,379 million people age 40 and older have open-angle **glaucoma, a 22 percent increase**
- 7,685,237 million people ages 40 and older have **diabetic retinopathy, an 89 percent increase**

“It’s no surprise that the numbers of those affected by eye disease are continuing to climb, especially due to the aging Baby Boomer population,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “What is exceptionally concerning is the dramatic spike in diabetic retinopathy cases, a consequence of the diabetes epidemic that this country is experiencing with no end in sight.”

Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults 20-74 years of age. According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), diabetes affects 25.8 million people in the United States. Although there is no cure for diabetic eye disease, annual eye exams for diabetes patients are essential to help slow the progression of the disease.

All data from the Vision Problems in the U.S. report can now be obtained through a new searchable database housed on the Prevent Blindness America website at [preventblindness.org/visionproblems](http://preventblindness.org/visionproblems). This unique tool enables users to research a wide range of information including eye disease and condition numbers broken down by state, age, sex, and race, and provides comparisons across disease conditions.

Added Parry, “It is our hope that this new data will provide those in the health community, the public and our nation’s leaders with the vital information they need to address these troubling numbers through programs, research and funding.”

For more information about the 2012 Vision Problems in the U.S. report, the Prevent Blindness America “Focus on Eye Health: A National Summit,” diabetes and other eye diseases, please visit [preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org) or call (800) 331-2020.

*For media: Downloadable graphs and other resources can be found under the News & Resources tab at [preventblindness.org/visionproblems](http://preventblindness.org/visionproblems)*

### **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 screening and training, 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 and regional offices, Prevent Blindness America is 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 [preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org) or [facebook.com/preventblindness](https://facebook.com/preventblindness).

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