



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 2012

For Further Information, Contact:
David Bobka, WOA Director of Communications
Email: davidwoaoffice@tds.net
Phone: 608.824.2200

PROTECT YOUR SIGHT DURING NATIONAL GLAUCOMA AWARENESS MONTH

The Wisconsin Optometric Association urges everyone to take a preventative stance against vision loss

MADISON, WI - According to the World Health Organization, glaucoma ranks as the second leading cause of blindness in the world, a staggering statistic that estimates the existence of approximately 70 million cases worldwide. Affecting over an estimated 4 million Americans, glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness in the United States as well, although only half of those affected are aware that they have the condition. As we join other organizations across the country in recognizing January as National Glaucoma Awareness Month, the member doctors of the **Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA)** strongly encourage everyone to visit their local optometrist for a comprehensive dilated eye examination in order to protect their vision and eye health from this often misunderstood, but severe condition.

"Glaucoma is the silent thief of sight," declares Dr. Jeff Sarazen, 2012 WOA President from Wausau, WI. "It develops slowly and without any symptoms; therefore, most people are not aware they have the condition until significant vision loss has already occurred."

Glaucoma is a degenerative eye disorder that gradually destroys the cells which make up the optic nerve. The optic nerve carries visual information from the eye to the brain. Untreated, glaucoma can cause significant vision loss and even blindness.

"Glaucoma cannot currently be cured and vision lost to glaucoma cannot be restored," explains Dr. Sarazen. "However, if diagnosed and treated early by a licensed eye doctor, in most cases it can be managed."

The only way to guarantee detection of this condition is through a comprehensive dilated eye exam, and the WOA recommends regular eye exams for adults and children. Eye doctors will recommend the appropriate frequency of these appointments based on an individual's overall health, risk factors, or family history.

Individuals at high-risk for glaucoma include: adults over 60 years of age, African Americans, people with a family history of glaucoma, and those who are severely nearsighted. However, everyone is at risk for glaucoma, from infants to senior citizens.

"Even though an individual may be in a 'higher risk' category than others, the only way to know for certain that you have glaucoma is to have a vision and eye health exam provided by a licensed eye doctor," professed Dr. Sarazen.

Please visit the WOA website, www.woa-eyes.org, for a list of licensed optometrists in your area.

The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Approximately 640 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA's website at www.woa-eyes.org.