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### **EARLY DETECTION AND TREATMENT IS KEY IN PROTECTING VISION FROM GLAUCOMA**

*The Wisconsin Optometric Association stresses the importance of yearly, comprehensive eye exams to maintain quality vision and eye health*

**MADISON, WI** – Glaucoma impacts approximately 2.7 million Americans and is the second leading cause of blindness in the U.S., and yet, understanding and awareness of this detrimental disease remains low in the public eye. Glaucoma attacks eyesight often without the presence of early warning signs. According to the American Optometric Association's (AOA) Ninth Annual American Eye-Q® survey, over 70 percent of Americans are unaware that glaucoma typically has no early symptoms.

"Glaucoma is often referred to as the 'sneak thief of sight,'" explains Dr. Eric Paulsen, 2015 WOA President and Sturgeon Bay, WI optometrist. "By the time symptoms do appear, it may be too late to save those affected from suffering permanent vision loss." Protect your sight by receiving a comprehensive, dilated exam performed by your eye doctor, during which glaucoma can be detected. Although glaucoma is not preventable and has no current cure, it can be controlled if diagnosed and treated early by a licensed eye doctor.

Glaucoma is a group of eye disorders that can damage the optic nerve and impair peripheral (side) vision. Untreated, glaucoma can cause significant vision loss and even blindness. The disease can accelerate quickly, and can affect patients at different stages of life. "A common misperception is that glaucoma only affects older adults when, in reality, it can happen at any age. In fact, it's most commonly detected in people in their 40s," acknowledges Dr. Paulsen.

As is the case with many diseases, factors such as race, genetics, and age can increase an individual's risk for developing glaucoma. According to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, glaucoma is six to eight times more common in African Americans than in Caucasians. Also at greater risk for glaucoma are those who have a family history of the disease, diabetic patients, those with hypothyroid conditions, and adults over the age of 60.

Treatment for glaucoma includes prescription eye drops and medication to reduce pressure in the eyes. In certain cases, laser treatment or surgery may be effective in reducing pressure. The only way to guarantee detection of this condition, however, is through a comprehensive eye exam, and the WOA recommends regular eye exams for adults and children.

To reduce glaucoma risk and maintain proper vision and eye health, WOA recommends the following tips:

- Reduce and/or eliminate "bad habits," including smoking, over consumption of alcohol, and excessive caffeine.
- Practice the "20-20-20" rule when working on computers/electronic devices – every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break to look at something which is approximately 20 feet away.
- Wear sunglasses which provide UV-A and UV-B protection year-round (even in the wintertime!).

Visit <http://www.woa-eyes.org/members> for a list of licensed eye doctors in your area. The early detection and treatment of glaucoma is crucial in saving vision.

#### **About the Wisconsin Optometric Association**

*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 630 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](http://www.woa-eyes.org).*

#### **About the survey**

*The ninth annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From March 20-25, 2014, PSB conducted 1,000 online interviews among Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of the U.S. general population (margin of error is plus or minus 3.10 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.)*