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EARLY DETECTION AND TREATMENT PROTECTS YOUR VISION FROM GLAUCOMA

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

MADISON, WI – Glaucoma impacts an estimated 3 million plus Americans and is the second leading cause of blindness in the world according to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, 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) 10th Annual American Eye-Q® survey, nearly 75 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. Callie Enyart, 2016 WOA President and Madison, WI area 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. Enyart.

As is the case with many diseases, factors such as age and race can increase an individual's risk for developing glaucoma. Also according to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, glaucoma is six to eight times more common in African Americans than in Caucasians (<http://www.glaucoma.org/glaucoma/glaucoma-facts-and-stats.php>). In addition, 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 reducing and/or eliminating smoking, over consumption of alcohol, and excessive caffeine.

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 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.

About the American Eye-Q® survey

The 10th annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From February 19-March 4, 2015, 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 percent confidence level.)