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Prevent Blindness America Seeks to Educate Public About Growing Threat of Diabetic Eye Disease

--Non-profit Provides Free Educational Materials As Part of November's Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month--

CHICAGO (Oct. 24, 2012) – The diabetes epidemic in the United States continues to have a serious impact on health, especially on vision. Today, it is estimated that more than 25 million Americans have diabetes and 79 million adults aged 20 and older have prediabetes. According to the [2012 Vision Problems in the U.S. report](#) from Prevent Blindness America and the National Eye Institute, more than 7.6 million people ages 40 and older have diabetic retinopathy, an 89 percent increase from 10 years ago. Additionally, people with diabetes are at greater risk for other eye diseases such as glaucoma and cataract.

Prevent Blindness America has declared November as Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month in order to help educate the public on diabetes prevention strategies, potential risk factors, treatment options and Medicare coverage policies. Diabetic retinopathy is an eye disease that weakens the small blood vessels in the retina. Retinal blood vessels can break down, leak, or become blocked - affecting and impairing vision over time. In some people with diabetic retinopathy, damage to the eye can occur when abnormal new blood vessels grow on the surface of the retina. Diabetic macular edema is a result of diabetic retinopathy and can lead to loss of central vision.

“The time to address the national crisis of diabetes is now,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “The public, our lawmakers and the public health community must be made aware of strategies that can help prevent diabetes before vision loss or other effects of the disease begin to take a toll on the body.”

Prevent Blindness America offers several free programs to provide the tools and information needed to protect vision from diabetes:

Live Right, Save Sight! – An online program designed to educate the public on diabetes and its potential effect on vision, as well as healthy choices that can be made today to protect vision in the future. Live Right, Save Sight! offers free materials

including a risk assessment quiz, basic diabetes facts and a detailed explanation of diabetic retinopathy at preventblindness.org/diabetes.

The Diabetic Eye Disease Educator Course – Offered in both English and Spanish, this program was developed to equip health educators with important patient and client education messages about diabetic eye disease and strategies for maintaining healthy vision that can be delivered through health outreach programs of community health centers, health departments, medical practices, and civic and faith-based organizations to those who are diabetic as well as populations at highest risk for developing diabetes, including African-Americans, Hispanics and Latinos. The online course can be found at <http://diabetes.preventblindness.org/>.

Healthy Eyes Educational Series, Adult Vision Problems Module – Community health educators and outreach workers, public health personnel, community and senior center program directors, employers seeking “lunch-and-learn” topics, and safety directors can utilize the Healthy Eyes Educational Series to conduct formal presentations or informal one-on-one sessions that can be customized utilizing modules most appropriate to the audience or clients. The Adult Vision Problems module covers signs and symptoms, risk factors, and treatment options for diabetic retinopathy, cataract and glaucoma. It can easily be downloaded for any presentation purposes at preventblindness.org/healthy-eyes-educational-series.

For more information on the diabetic eye disease, Live Right, Save Sight!, The Diabetic Eye Disease Educator Series, or the Healthy Eyes Educational Series, please call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020 or visit preventblindness.org/diabetes.

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 or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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