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## **Number of Glaucoma Cases in the United States Climbs 22 Percent**

***Prevent Blindness America Joins in January's National Glaucoma Awareness  
Month to Educate Public on Second Leading Cause of Blindness***

**CHICAGO (Dec. 12, 2012)** – More than 2.7 million Americans age 40 and older have open-angle glaucoma, a 22 percent increase from just 10 years ago, according to the [2012 Vision Problems in the U.S.](#) report from Prevent Blindness America and the National Eye Institute. Along with the troubling increase in the number of cases, is the major concern that half of those people who have glaucoma are not aware of it.

To address this major public health concern, Prevent Blindness America is joining with other leading vision and eye health groups to declare January as National Glaucoma Awareness Month. Prevent Blindness America provides free resources to educate the public on glaucoma through “The Glaucoma Learning Center,” a website at [www.preventblindness.org/glaucoma](http://www.preventblindness.org/glaucoma), and printed materials, available by request.

Because symptoms develop so gradually that the patient may not notice them right away, glaucoma is often referred to as the “sneak thief of sight.” Glaucoma is actually a group of eye conditions that can damage the optic nerve. Symptoms for open-angle glaucoma may include developing blind spots in the peripheral vision. If left untreated, over time, glaucoma may also damage central vision.

Risk factors for glaucoma include age, family history, nearsightedness, eye injury or surgery and the use of steroid medications. Race is another major risk factor as, according to the National Eye Institute, glaucoma is five times more likely to occur in blacks than in whites, and blacks are four times more likely to go blind from it. Hispanics are more likely to develop glaucoma after age 60 than any other group.

Once vision is lost to glaucoma, it cannot be restored. However, promising research from the University of Michigan Medical School, led by Joshua Stein, MD, MS, found that the risk for glaucoma was reduced by eight percent in hyperlipidemia patients who took statins continuously for two years, compared with patients who did not take statins. The study entitled “[The Relationship Between Statin Use and Open-Angle Glaucoma](#)” found that statin use may be most effective in the early stages of the disease or as a preventive measure. The findings offer encouragement for future research on the effects of statins on a broader group of people.

“As we begin 2013, we hope that everyone’s New Year’s resolution will be to make their eye health a priority and schedule an eye exam,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “Through early detection and treatment, we can help lessen the effects of glaucoma and other eye diseases on vision.”

For more information on glaucoma or Medicare benefits for glaucoma services, please call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020 or visit [preventblindness.org/glaucoma](http://preventblindness.org/glaucoma).

**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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