

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Sarah Hecker  
Prevent Blindness  
Phone: (312) 363-6035  
[shecker@preventblindness.org](mailto:shecker@preventblindness.org)

**Prevent Blindness Study Projects Large Increase in Number of  
Glaucoma Cases, Significant Impact in Hispanic and Black  
Populations by 2050**

**CHICAGO (Dec. 22, 2015)** – Today, nearly 3 million people ages 40 and older have glaucoma, according to the Prevent Blindness “[Future of Vision: Forecasting the Prevalence and Costs of Vision Problems](#)” report. As the population ages, the number is projected to grow steadily, increasing nearly 50 percent to 4.3 million by 2032 and by more than 90 percent to 5.5 million by 2050. Glaucoma is an eye disease that currently has no cure. It causes loss of sight by damaging a part of the eye called the optic nerve.

January has been declared as National Glaucoma Awareness Month by Prevent Blindness and other leading eye health organizations, in an effort to help educate the public on the disease, including risk factors, treatment options and other resources. In addition, Prevent Blindness offers the online “[Glaucoma Learning Center](#),” providing patients and their caregivers with additional free information.

The study also found that although more than 60 percent of glaucoma patients today are white, by 2050, most glaucoma patients will be non-white, due primarily to the rapid increase in Hispanic glaucoma patients. By 2050, blacks and Hispanics will each constitute about 20 percent of all glaucoma patients.

Glaucoma is often referred to as the “sneak thief of sight” because most people notice no early symptoms or pain. However, vision loss may be decreased if detected and treated early. That is why it is imperative for adults to get a complete, dilated eye exam from an eye care professional for the best chance of saving their sight.

There are many risk factors for glaucoma including:

- **Age** – The older you are, the greater you are at risk (especially if you are over 60 years old). African Americans are at a greater risk at a younger age starting at age 40 and older.
- **Race** – African Americans age 40 and over are 4-5 times more likely to have glaucoma than others. Hispanics are also at increased risk for glaucoma as they

age. Those of Asian and Native American descent are at increased risk for angle closure glaucoma.

- **Diabetes** – According to the American Diabetes Association, people with diabetes are 40 percent more likely to suffer from glaucoma than people without diabetes. The longer someone has had diabetes, the more common glaucoma is.
- **Family history** – If you have a parent, brother or sister with glaucoma, you are more likely to get glaucoma. If you have glaucoma, inform your family members to get complete eye exams.
- **Medical history** – You are at risk if you have a history of high pressure in your eyes, previous eye injury, long term steroid use, or nearsightedness.

“Promising new research on glaucoma and other eye diseases is being conducted every day, but until there is a cure we must take the necessary steps today to save our sight for the future,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “As the New Year begins, now is the perfect time to make a resolution to make your eye health a priority and schedule an eye exam today!”

Prevent Blindness offers free fact sheets to help answer common questions about health insurance, Medicare coverage for glaucoma, the Affordable Care Act and eye care at [www.preventblindness.org/health-insurance-and-your-eyes](http://www.preventblindness.org/health-insurance-and-your-eyes).

For more information on glaucoma, please call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020 or visit [www.preventblindness.org/glaucoma-learning-center](http://www.preventblindness.org/glaucoma-learning-center).

### **About Prevent Blindness**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness 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 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, Prevent Blindness 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).

###