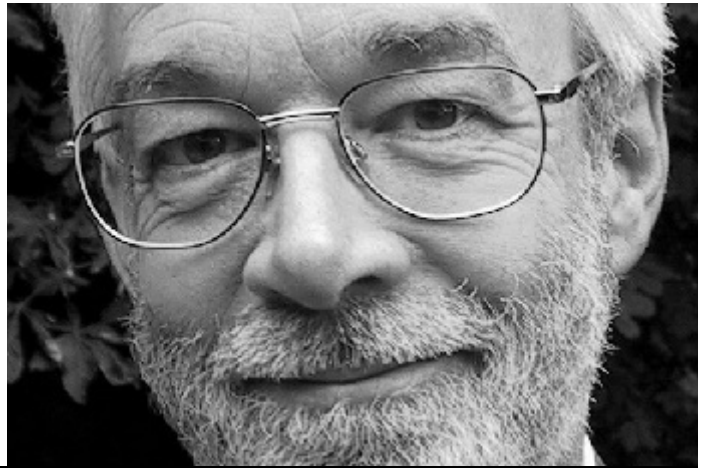




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FACTS ABOUT VISION RESEARCH

According to the *Vision Problems in the U.S. (VPUS)* report, there are approximately 3.4 million Americans age 40 and older who are blind or visually impaired. These numbers are expected to double in the next three decades. The report estimates there are 20.5 million Americans age 40 and older with cataract; 5.3 million age 18 and older with diabetic retinopathy; 2.2 million age 40 and older with glaucoma; and 1.6 million age 50 and older with the late stages of age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Vision loss robs people of their mobility, independence, and quality of life, and costs taxpayers an estimated \$4 billion annually. As our population ages, these costs will increase and dramatically challenge our health care delivery system. Only through further advances in research will we gain a better understanding of vision disorders so that we can find cost-effective treatments and cures.

Eye and vision research opportunities are extraordinary. We are entering an era where

our research investments over the past 20 years promise to have a tremendous impact on our ability to prevent, diagnose and effectively treat eye disease today and in the future.

The scientific and technological capability now exists to make great progress in a number of age-related disorders, if an expanded research effort is supported. This research progress will only be possible if the National Eye Institute (NEI) has the resources necessary to pursue initiatives in key areas.

Cataracts

More than one million cataract surgeries are performed every year, costing Medicare in excess of \$3.4 billion a year. While there is no cure, there are lifestyle changes that can reduce some of your risks of developing cataract. Intense heat or long-term exposure to UV rays from the sun can increase your risk. Wear sunglasses with 99 to 100% UV protection and wear a wide-brimmed hat.

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 training, community and patient service programs and research.

Protect your eyes with the proper eye goggles/glasses while playing sports, while working on do-it-yourself projects at home, and at work, depending on your job. Eye injuries are a risk factor for getting cataracts, and 90% of eye injuries can be prevented. Smoking, alcohol consumption and obesity have all been shown to have a link to cataract. Quitting smoking, limiting your alcohol intake, and maintaining a proper weight can help reduce the risk of getting cataract, as well as leading to better health in general.

Diabetic Eye Disease

The annual cost of diabetes in medical expenditures and lost productivity soared from \$98 billion in 1997 to \$132 billion in 2002, according to a study by the American Diabetes Association. The direct medical costs of diabetes more than doubled in that time, from \$44 billion in 1997 to \$91.8 billion in 2002. Diabetes research and public education on new treatments and prevention should be one of the nation's top health priorities.

If you have diabetes, you can take three important steps to prevent vision loss from diabetic retinopathy:

- 1. Watch and control your blood sugar levels**
- 2. Take care of yourself**
- 3. See an eye doctor at least once a year**

Glaucoma

Treatment for glaucoma has improved greatly in the last decade. Prostaglandin analogues, the newest class of glaucoma drug, were introduced in the United States in 1996. This type of medication is most helpful for people who cannot tolerate other glaucoma drugs.

The Early Manifest Glaucoma Trial, an NEI-sponsored study found that immediate treatment of newly-discovered primary open-angle glaucoma, led to a slower rate of disease progression. The findings from this study reinforce building medical evidence that lowering eye pressure in glaucoma's early stages slows progression of the disease.

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)

Laser therapies can be effective in controlling the advances of wet AMD, but are not useful in treating dry AMD. The NEI-sponsored Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS), released in October 2001, gives real hope to people with dry AMD. The study suggests that pharmacological-level doses of zinc, vitamins C and E, and beta-carotene may help slow the progression of age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Research suggests that long-term diets low in certain antioxidant nutrients may increase the risk of AMD.

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