



211 West Wacker Drive
Suite 1700
Chicago, Illinois 60606

toll free 800.331.2020
local 312.363.6001
fax 312.363.6052

preventblindness.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:
Prevent Blindness America
Sarah Hecker
(312) 363-6035
shecker@preventblindness.org

New Study Emphasizes Importance of Eye Exams for New Medicare Enrollees

--Prevent Blindness America Supports Dilated Eye Exams for All New Medicare Program Participants--

CHICAGO (Jan. 12, 2012) Prevent Blindness America, the nation's oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, is encouraged by the results of a new study suggesting all new enrollees receive a dilated eye exam as part of the "Welcome to Medicare" process. The study, "[The Cost-effectiveness of Welcome to Medicare Visual Acuity Screening and a Possible Alternative Welcome to Medicare Eye Evaluation Among Persons Without Diagnosed Diabetes Mellitus](#)," led by David B. Rein, PhD and recently published in the *Archives of Ophthalmology*, concluded that reimbursement for dilated eye exams is highly cost-effective.

The main purpose of the study was to compare the cost-effectiveness of vision screenings performed in primary care settings to dilated eye exams performed by eye care professionals on the average annual 2 million new Medicare enrollees, ages 65 and over with no diagnosed eye disorders. The results of the study concluded that vision screenings within this particular population were not cost-effective based on factors such as non-compliance or the ability to detect major forms of eye disease through the screening process alone. Prevent Blindness America acknowledges that the purpose of vision screening is to increase the number of those in need of care to receive comprehensive eye exams.

"This study highlights the need to provide full comprehensive eye exams for all as they enter Medicare," said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. "However, the results do not negate the need for preventive interventions such as risk assessments and vision screenings, particularly for those in the pre-Medicare population who may often be less motivated to seek eye care, experience more barriers, and are generally less likely to be an effective partner in caring for their vision health."

Prevent Blindness America encourages all adults to seek quality eye care services before the age of 65 to limit the impact of eye disease. The group started the [20/20 at 40](#) initiative to educate adults on the importance of receiving regular eye care, specifically starting at age 40, as a way to achieve a lifetime of healthy vision. Vision loss from eye diseases such as diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, macular degeneration, and cataracts, is often preventable if detected and treated early.

For more information on 20/20 at 40 or general information on eye health, please contact Prevent Blindness America by visiting preventblindness.org/2020-40 or call (800) 331-2020.

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 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, divisions and chapters, 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 (800) 331-2020 or visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or [Facebook.com/preventblindness](https://www.facebook.com/preventblindness).

###