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New Study Forecasts Number of Diabetic Eye Disease Cases to Reach Nearly 11 Million by 2032

-Prevent Blindness Calls on Public Health Agencies to Increase Attention to Diabetic Eye Disease-

CHICAGO (Oct. 23, 2014) – Public health agencies across the country are feeling the impact from the skyrocketing number of diabetes cases on public health programs and funding. Eye disease is one potential consequence of diabetes on public health, as it can lead to vision loss and blindness. According to a [recent study from Prevent Blindness](#), the estimated number of diabetic retinopathy cases in 2014 is currently more than 8 million. The number is projected to increase to nearly 11 million by 2032.

Prevent Blindness has declared November as Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month to help educate the public on diabetes prevention strategies, potential risk factors, treatment options and Medicare coverage policies. To assist in this effort, the organization is calling on state and local public health agencies to increase their attention to the eye care needs of those living with diabetes, as well as those who may be at high risk for the condition.

Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in the United States. Diabetes patients are 40 percent more likely to develop glaucoma and 60 percent more likely to develop cataracts than those without diabetes. Early detection and treatment of diabetes can help prevent vision impairment and blindness.

“Public education is an important key to reducing the onset of vision problems related to diabetes,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “Public health workers at the state and local level are committed to the health and well-being of those living in their state, and can have the largest impact on increasing public awareness.”

Prevent Blindness has distributed a number of [diabetic eye disease resources](#) to key public health leaders, encouraging them to join the sight-saving fight to address this growing epidemic. Such resources include an online course aimed at preparing health educators to address the vision care needs of their clients, information on the growing impact of diabetic eye disease, financial assistance resources for those in need, eye health fact sheets, and many more.

Programs include:

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 individuals with diabetes 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.

Living Well With Low Vision – Designed for people living with low vision, and their caretakers, to educate themselves about loss of vision and to meet the daily challenges resulting from it. By empowering individuals, we hope to provide practical ways for people to improve the quality of their daily lives and relieve the emotional trauma that often accompanies low vision. The program can be found at <http://lowvision.preventblindness.org/>.

Additional resources include state prevalence rates and cost information related to diabetic eye disease as well as a listing of financial assistance resources.

For more information on diabetic eye disease, please call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020 or visit preventblindness.org/diabetes.

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 and regional offices, 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 or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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