

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Prevent Blindness to Hold First-Ever A.S.P.E.C.T. Patient Advocacy and Engagement Summit in Washington, D.C.**

***- Three-day event to bring together participants and sponsors of the Prevent Blindness A.S.P.E.C.T (Advocacy, Support, Perspective, Empowerment, Communication, and Training) Patient Engagement Program -***

**CHICAGO (May 3, 2022)** – [Prevent Blindness](#), the nation’s leading non-profit eye health and safety organization, will be holding the inaugural A.S.P.E.C.T. Patient Advocacy and Engagement Summit, May 9-11, 2022, at the Willard InterContinental Hotel in Washington, D.C. The Summit will bring together trainees, allies, and program sponsors from across the country.

Founded in 2020, the [A.S.P.E.C.T. \(Advocacy, Support, Perspective, Empowerment, Communication, and Training\) Patient Engagement Program at Prevent Blindness](#) aims to equip participants with knowledge, skills, and confidence to become advocates for vision and eye health- at the individual, peer-to-peer, community, state, and/or national levels. The goal is for patients and allies to become versed and involved in the vision condition that impacts their life, understand the disease process, and receive the Prevent Blindness “V2: Voice for Vision” advocacy training, which creates powerful voices addressing vision conditions in local, state, and national settings.

“In 1908, Prevent Blindness was founded as a public health advocacy organization. Empowering individuals to advocate for their own eye health and that of others – through programs such as A.S.P.E.C.T. – is at the very core of our mission,” said Jeff Todd, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness.

The A.S.P.E.C.T. Patient Advocacy and Engagement Summit will include a variety of educational sessions and group exercises on topics such as:

- What we can learn from the COVID 19 pandemic to advocate for equity in access to vision and eye health care
- How we can use personal stories to address the mental health impacts of vision loss
- How to address gaps in healthcare delivery and patient provider communication for those with vision loss

- The role of health and wellness in independence for the visually impaired and blind community
- How to advocate for inclusive technology and assistive devices

The A.S.P.E.C.T. Program is generously supported by Sustaining Level Partners Genentech, Horizon Therapeutics, and Novartis. Apellis and Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals are Premier Level Partners. Supporting Level Partners include the AR and JR Peacock Trusts, Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO), and Spark Therapeutics.

Recruiting for the fourth cohort of the A.S.P.E.C.T. program is currently underway. Individuals with vision impairment or blindness, as well as allies (i.e. loved ones, non-profit representatives, multidisciplinary clinicians, and researchers) are encouraged to [apply](#). Classes are free and held virtually every other week for 8 sessions total, spanning June to September 2022. Specific dates and times will be determined based on the needs of the group. Patient and caregiver participants will receive an honorarium for participation. The deadline to apply is Friday, June 3, 2022.

Past A.S.P.E.C.T. participant, Mariagrazia Buttitta, said of her experience in the program, “I was touched by the stories that were shared about blindness and low vision. Even though we all had different eye conditions and journeys, we all shared something in common. We were all there to better ourselves and the community around us by wanting to educate others who lack an understanding of what it’s like to live with vision loss.”

For more information on the A.S.P.E.C.T. program, please visit [cvph.preventblindness.org/aspect-program/](https://cvph.preventblindness.org/aspect-program/). For more information on the A.S.P.E.C.T. Patient Advocacy and Engagement Summit, contact Julie Grutzmacher at [jgrutzmacher@PreventBlindness.org](mailto:jgrutzmacher@PreventBlindness.org).

### **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, visit us at [preventblindness.org](https://preventblindness.org), and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

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