

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Prevent Blindness to Host 12th Annual Focus on Eye Health Summit,  
a Two-Day Virtual Interactive Event, with Focus on Research,  
Empowerment through Storytelling, and Mental Health Related to  
Vision Loss**

**CHICAGO (May 17, 2023)** – [Prevent Blindness](#), the nation’s leading eye health and safety nonprofit organization, will host the 12<sup>th</sup> annual [Prevent Blindness Focus on Eye Health Summit](#) on July 12-13, 2023, as a virtual interactive event. Expert presentations related to this year’s theme, “Why the Eye?” will engage diverse voices in discussions around vision health as it relates to public health, stimulate conversations around the challenges to equitable access to eye care, explore new and unique collaborations across stakeholders, and identify opportunities to integrate vision and eye health into public health policies, practices, and research advancement.

This global event offers simultaneous access to expert presentations, an exhibitor hall, educational materials, videos, and toolkits, and in-platform opportunities for networking and collaboration. Expected attendees include patient advocates, community-based and advocacy organizations, national vision and eye health organizations, researchers, health-care providers, educators, early childhood education professionals, senior- and child-care professionals, government agency staff, corporate partners, health program professionals, legislative staff, and more. All are invited to visit the social media lounge, and follow on Prevent Blindness social media platforms at #eyesummit.

The Summit will kick-off on July 12<sup>th</sup>, with keynote speaker [Neil M. Bressler, M.D.](#), Professor of Ophthalmology, Johns Hopkins Medicine, and editor-in-chief of *JAMA Ophthalmology*, with his presentation, “Advances in Eyecare and the Impact on the Patient.”

Additional presentations on day one of the Focus on Eye Health Summit will include:

- **Making an Impact With the Stories We Tell**
  - Moderator: Kevin D. Frick, PhD, Johns Hopkins Carey Business School
  - Patrice Marie Hicks, PhD, MPH, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, University of Michigan
  - Sila Bal, MD, MPH, Cornea and Refractive Surgery Fellow, Harvard Ophthalmology
  - Christina Gill, Global Family Coordinator, Know the Glow

- **Reimagining How We Engage Communities from Identification into Care – Children and Adults**
  - Moderator: Tami Garcia, President & CEO, [Prevent Blindness Wisconsin](#)
  - Verian Wedeking, Program Director, OHSU Casey Eye Institute Community Outreach
  - Mayhoua Moua, Executive Director, Milwaukee Consortium for Hmong Health, Inc.
  - Ellen K. Antwi-Adjei, OD, MPH, Vision Science Graduate Program Trainee, University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry
  - Mercedes Hernández, MPH, CHES, Director of Child and Family Health, East Coast Migrant Head Start Project

Additionally, Jim McGrann, Prevent Blindness Board of Directors Chair, will formally present the [2023 Jenny Pomeroy Award for Excellence in Vision and Public Health](#) to Dean A. VanNasdale, OD, PhD, Associate Professor at [The Ohio State University \(OSU\) College of Optometry](#). One of the highest honors Prevent Blindness bestows, the Jenny Pomeroy Award for Excellence in Vision and Public Health recognizes an individual, team, or organization that has made significant contributions to the advancement of public health related to vision and eye health at the community, state, national, and/or international level.

The fourth annual [Prevent Blindness Rising Visionary Award](#) will be presented to Christina Ambrosino, medical student at [Johns Hopkins School of Medicine](#). The Rising Visionary Award is presented annually to a student, intern, or resident in optometry, ophthalmology, primary health care, nursing, or other health-related field in the United States, who submits the best essay based on a question related to the 2023 Focus on Eye Health Summit theme.

The second day of the Focus on Eye Health Summit will be dedicated to mental health and vision. The Summit will begin with keynote speaker, Julian Eaton, BSc, MSc, MBBS, MRCPsych, Mental Health Director, CBM Global, Assistant Professor, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, with his presentation, “Innovative Mental Health Approaches.” The session will address the importance of, and share actionable steps for, integrating mental health into the vision and eye health community.

Presentations following the keynote address on July 13<sup>th</sup> will include:

- **Forum on the Public Health Connection Between Mental Wellness and Vision**
  - Moderator: Steven M. Silverstein, PhD, Professor of Psychiatry, Neuroscience, and Ophthalmology, University of Rochester Medical Center
  - **Patient Perspective:** Carol Johnson, [Prevent Blindness ASPECT Patient Engagement Program](#) Graduate
  - **Public Health Case Around Mental Health and Vision:** Varshini Varadaraj, MD, MPH, Research Associate, Johns Hopkins Disability Health Research Center

- **Overview of Prevent Blindness Issue Brief – Vision Loss and Mental Health: Key Takeaways from an Interprofessional Task Force:** Julie Grutzmacher, MSW, MPH, Director of Patient Advocacy & Population Health Initiatives
- **Provider Roundtable Discussion**
  - Melissa Taussig, MA, LCPC, Private Practice, Prevent Blindness ASPECT Patient Engagement Program Graduate
  - K. Thiran Jayasundera, MD, MS, FACS, FRCSC, FRANZCO, Paul R. Lichter Professor of Ophthalmic Genetics, Kellogg Eye Center, University of Michigan
  - Rochelle Neutra, FNP, MSN, Prevent Blindness ASPECT Patient Engagement Program Graduate
  - Kelly Scherer, OD, Director of Clinical Services, The Chicago Lighthouse
- **Patient Perspective:** Larry Woodard, Prevent Blindness ASPECT Patient Engagement Program Graduate
- **Policy Opportunities and Obstacles Around Vision and Mental Wellness**
  - Moderator: Jennifer Dexter, Vice President of Policy, National Health Council
  - Sara D. Brown, MPA, Director of Government Affairs, Prevent Blindness
  - Angela Kimball, Senior Vice President of Advocacy and Public Policy, Inseparable

To date, Platinum Sponsors of the 2023 Focus on Eye Health Summit are the Alliance for Aging Research, Horizon Therapeutics, and PhRMA. Gold sponsors include Apellis Pharmaceuticals, BrightFocus Foundation, the [Center for Vision and Population Health at Prevent Blindness](#), and the [National Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness](#).

Silver Summit sponsors include Alexion, American Academy of Ophthalmology, American Glaucoma Society, American Society of Retinal Specialists, The EyeSight Foundation of Alabama, Foundation Fighting Blindness, Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson, Lions Clubs International Foundation, Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals, National Industries for the Blind, National Keratoconus Foundation, Patient Access Network (PAN) Foundation, and VisionServe Alliance.

“Every year, the Focus on Eye Health Summit convenes exceptional individuals who generously share their expertise, passion, and dedication to improve vision and eye health for all,” said [Jeff Todd](#), president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “As we enter our 115<sup>th</sup> year of public health and patient advocacy, we encourage everyone to join us on July 12-13 to collaborate, innovate, and work collectively in order to achieve better vision health outcomes for generations to come.”

To register for the 2023 Prevent Blindness Focus on Eye Health Summit, visit [PreventBlindness.org/eyesummit](https://PreventBlindness.org/eyesummit). For information about sponsorship opportunities, please contact Nita Sinha, Director of Public Health, at [eyesummit@preventblindness.org](mailto:eyesummit@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](http://PreventBlindness.org), and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

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