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Glaucoma Takes Sight without Warning:

Local Doctor Answers Questions during National Glaucoma Awareness Month to Help Protect Against Vision Loss

Medford, OR (January 6, 2010) – According to the Oregon Optometric Physicians (OOPA), early detection and treatment is critical to protect your eyes from the effects of potentially blinding diseases, such as glaucoma. Studies show that over the next 10 years the number of Americans diagnosed with glaucoma will increase by more than one million, yet patients are not doing as much as they can to protect their vision.

“January is National Glaucoma Awareness month, and we want people to know that glaucoma can strike without pain or other symptoms,” said Dr. Ken Loftus, optometric physician from the Medford area. “Vision lost to glaucoma cannot be restored, so early detection and treatment is paramount.”

Below are some common questions about glaucoma answered by Dr. Loftus.

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of eye disorders leading to progressive damage to the optic nerve, resulting in loss of vision.

How prevalent is it?

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the U.S., yet awareness of the disease is relatively low.

Is it preventable?

No, but according to the American Optometric Association (AOA), six in 10 Americans believe glaucoma is preventable (it's not). However, it is treatable.

How is glaucoma treated?

Medication or surgery can slow or prevent further vision loss.

Who is at risk for the disease?

According to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, African Americans ages 45 to 65 are up to 17 times more likely to go blind from glaucoma than Caucasians. Other risk factors include people who have a family history of glaucoma, are over age 60, or have had severe eye trauma. Some studies suggest high amounts of nearsightedness, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes may also be risk factors for the development of glaucoma.

In general how can I help save or improve my sight?

- The OOPA recommends eye exams every two years for adults under age 60 and every year thereafter.
- Watch that diet: Eat green, leafy vegetables and foods rich in nutrients like beta carotene, vitamin C and zinc to protect eyes from disease.

- Cut down on those bad habits: Cigarettes and alcohol or excessive caffeine intake can all be harmful to the eyes.
- If you work in front of a computer, practice the 20/20 rule: every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break to help avoid eye strain and computer vision syndrome.
- Wear those shades: Both adults and children should wear sunglasses year-round with UV-A and UV-B protection.
- Visit your optometric physician if you are experiencing stinging, itchy, or scratchy eyes, excessive tearing, or any eye discomfort or reduced vision; he or she may recommend artificial tears or tear substitutes, or prescribe medication.

Where can I find out more?

To find an optometric physician in your area, or for more information on glaucoma, please visit www.oregonoptometry.org or www.aoa.org.

About the survey:

The fourth annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From May 21 – 24, 2009, using an online methodology, PSB interviewed 1,000 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. general population. (Margin of error at 95 percent confidence level.)

About the American Optometric Association (AOA):

The American Optometric Association represents approximately 36,000 doctors of optometry, optometry students and paraoptometric assistants and technicians. Optometrists serve patients in nearly 6,500 communities across the country, and in 3,500 of those communities are the only eye doctors. Doctors of optometry provide two-thirds of all primary eye care in the United States. For more information, visit www.aoa.org.

About the Oregon Optometric Physicians Association (OOPA)

The Oregon Optometric Physicians Association is a statewide organization comprised of optometric physicians, college of optometry faculty, optometric students and industry-related associates. It advocates advancing the quality, availability and accessibility of eye, vision and related health care. It also works to represent the profession of optometry, to enhance and promote the independent and ethical decision making of its members, and to assist optometric physicians in practicing the highest standards of patient care. Based in Milwaukie, Oregon, the OOPA has nearly 400 members. For more information, visit www.oregonoptometry.org.

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