
Australian Society of Ophthalmologists Inc. ABN 29 454 001 424

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WORLD GLAUCOMA WEEK 2018

Encouraging ophthalmologists to create conversations with patients

The Australian Society of Ophthalmologists (ASO) is encouraging eye surgeons throughout the country to create a conversation with patients this week about glaucoma and its risk factors.

The goal is to raise awareness of the often 'hidden' eye condition and support Glaucoma Australia in its quest to find the 150,000 Australians who have glaucoma but don't even know it.

Estimates suggest 300,000 Australians currently suffer from glaucoma but only half of this number are aware they have the condition.

Generally there are no symptoms or warning signs in the early stages of glaucoma. Loss of sight is usually gradual and up to 40% of vision can be lost before there is an awareness of any problem.

ASO Vice President, Sydney glaucoma surgeon Dr Ashish Agar said the Society had sent its membership base of close to 500 ophthalmologists a reminder email this week with six simple glaucoma facts they should be talking to patients about.

"Achieving greater awareness of glaucoma and its risk factors comes down to communication," Dr Agar said.

"For us as doctors that means we need to be creating conversations with our patients about glaucoma," he said.

"A key fact many people are not aware of is that first degree relatives of people with glaucoma have an up to 10-fold increased risk of developing the condition.

"Regular eye exams for these at-risk Australians are imperative," he said.

Dr Agar said it was also important for people to know that the early detection of glaucoma provides more options for treatment and better outcomes.

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The six facts Australians should know about glaucoma are:

1. **Hidden sufferers.** More than 300,000 Australians are likely to have glaucoma, but only 50% of this number have been diagnosed.
2. **Glaucoma is a thief.** Generally there are no symptoms or warning signs in the early stages of this eye condition. The loss of sight is usually gradual and up to 40% of vision can be lost before there is an awareness of any problem.
3. **Increased risk.** First degree relatives of people with glaucoma have an up to 10-fold increased risk of developing the condition. The familial link underscores the importance of asking the right questions of patients.
4. **More than one type.** Most people don't know there are different kinds of glaucoma. Patients diagnosed with primary open-angle (POAG) and angle-closure glaucoma experience increased intraocular pressure (IOP). A third type, normal tensions glaucoma, occurs when the optic nerve has been damaged despite a normal IOP.
5. **Eye exams are imperative.** Routine eye exams are imperative for at-risk Australians.
6. **Saving sight.** Early detection of glaucoma provides more options for treatment and better outcomes.

Ends.

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