



Optometrists combat 'sneaky' sight-stealing disease that one in two sufferers don't realise they have

15 March 2017. As World Glaucoma Week (March 12 – 18) draws to a close, Optometry Australia has applauded Glaucoma Australia's emotive campaign which drives home the message: Don't miss life's precious moments and get your eyes tested today.

The Glaucoma Aware campaign aims to unearth 150,000 Australians who face preventable blindness and don't know it.

Glaucoma Australia reports more 300,000 Australians have the condition but only half ¹ them have been diagnosed.

According to the campaign's recent survey results conducted by Edelman Intelligence, around 60% of Australians either haven't been tested or don't know if they've been tested for glaucoma.

This is of great concern to Optometry Australia, which is on a mission to curb preventable eye disease through regular eye examinations.

Optometry Australia's resident optometrist, Luke Arundel, observed, "What we're finding is that the motivation for getting a test is coming when vision changes.

"In some cases, that's shutting the gate after the horse has bolted."

Glaucoma is one of the "sneaky" conditions that can go undetected without a check-up until it is too late, Mr Arundel explained.

"It's an invisible, painless disease. The sad truth is that a lot of Australians are out there undiagnosed right now.

"Because it's nerve damage, there's no getting it back. If we pick it up early, we can stop you losing the vision, stop you from going blind, but we need to be ahead of the game."

Age and family history are the biggest risk factors. According to National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines, glaucoma prevalence is four to ten times higher in people aged 60 years or older, compared to individuals in their 40s.

Relatives of glaucoma patients have a ten-fold increased risk of developing the disease². National guidelines encourage every Australian over the age of 50 to get a comprehensive eye exam to test for the early signs of glaucoma.

1

Wensor MD et al. The prevalence of glaucoma in the Melbourne Visual Impairment Project. *Ophthalmology*. 1998 Apr;105(4):7339.

2 American Optometric Association. Care of the Patient with Open Angle Glaucoma. Reference Guide for Clinicians. St Louis, MO: American Optometric Association; 2011.



An [emotive video](#), launched for Glaucoma Week, shows the tragic loss of vision and 'precious moments' which could have been saved by earlier detection.

Don't miss life's precious moments and get your eyes tested today. To find an optometrist in your area visit goodvisionforlife.com.au.

#GlaucomaAware

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Optometry Australia is the peak professional body for optometrists. Representing eight out of every ten Australian-based optometrists, Optometry Australia's focus is to lead and advance the profession of optometry by putting eye-health front and centre of Australian health care.