

Almost 400 people received a free AMD eye test from the Novartis mobile testing unit during AMD Awareness

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AMD (Age Related Macular Degeneration) is the leading cause of blindness in Ireland¹ and affects one in ten people over 50^{2,3} with 7,000 new cases diagnosed each year¹. The AMD Awareness Campaign, which is supported by Fighting Blindness, NCBI: the National Sight Loss Organisation, The Irish College of Ophthalmologists, the Association of Optometrists Ireland and Novartis Ireland, highlights the importance of regular eye testing and the benefits of early diagnosis and treatment by encouraging more conversation about AMD.

The theme of this year's campaign "Begin Your New Chapter", sought to harness the love of reading whilst raising the profile of AMD. Reading is a favourite pastime of so many Irish people, yet it is a passion that can be negatively impacted by vision loss. Bestselling Irish authors such as Sheila O'Flanagan, Sinead Moriarty and Colm O'Regan took much-loved classic novels and changed their endings, emphasising that just as the endings of our favourite books can change, people can make positive changes for their eye health by getting regular eye tests and looking after their eye health. The alternative endings are available to read in the "Begin Your New Chapter Booklet", available at www.AMD.ie where people can access more information on AMD.

During AMD awareness week (15th -21st September), the public can avail of a free AMD eye tests in participating eye care providers and on the Novartis AMD mobile testing unit. This year's AMD Awareness Campaign saw an increase of 41% in people availing of free AMD eye tests in comparison to 2013. Almost 400 people throughout the country availed of a free AMD testing in the Novartis AMD mobile testing unit alone with 14% referred to an eye specialist for further investigation.

References:

1. The cost of Sight Loss Report NCBI 2012
2. Vingerling JR et al. Epidemiol Rev 1995; 17:347-60
3. Klein et al. Ophthalmology 1992; 99:933-43

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2. <https://prod1.novartis.com/ie-en/taxonomy/term/61>
3. <http://www.amd.ie/>