

Novartis global survey shows 85% fear blindness, but only 33% have regular eye examination

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- Survey shows 85% of respondents are most afraid to lose eye sight of their five senses, 87% of respondents believe regular eye exams are important but only 33% reported visiting annual screenings
- Glaucoma is a worldwide leading cause of irreversible blindness, but 54% of respondents were unfamiliar with the condition

Makati City, Philippines, March 12, 2017 – In line with the celebration of the 7th World Glaucoma Week on March 12 to 18, research-based Swiss healthcare company Novartis highlighted results of an international survey showing that the majority of respondents (54%) are unfamiliar with glaucoma. The survey also showed that 87% of respondents believe regular eye exams are important but only 33% reported having one annually.

Glaucoma, a leading cause of blindness, affects approximately 60 million people around the world. Glaucoma is often undetected because it is an almost symptomless eye disease that worsens over time and may lead to blindness. The most common form of glaucoma, often associated with a buildup of pressure within the eye, can develop without any symptoms and may lead to permanent vision loss. It is known as the 'silent thief of sight.' Glaucoma risk factors include high eye pressure, family history, diabetes and old age as many. If diagnosed early, the condition may be controlled.

“As a global leader in the field of eye health, Novartis wants to raise awareness of the importance of regular eye exams from an eye care professional. Early diagnosis and treatment is essential, but many people are not aware that they may face the risk of glaucoma and potential blindness,” said Ms. Cheryl Maley, President & Managing Director, Novartis Healthcare Philippines. “The results of our survey support recommendations from scientific experts and patient organizations showing there is a significant gap between awareness of the disease, its potential impact and the relatively low individual acceptance of the regular screening.”

The global burden of glaucoma is predicted to increase further, with the number of people living with the disease worldwide rising to an estimated 76 million by 2020.

Additional key findings from the survey include:

- 85% of respondents stated that of the five senses, they would be most afraid of losing their sense of sight.
- The primary reasons for respondents not having a recent eye exam were: a lack of money or insurance (21%); the belief that “I don’t have any eye problems” (19%); the belief that a yearly exam is not necessary (17%).
- 54% of respondents were unfamiliar with glaucoma – respondents were most familiar with cataracts.

The comprehensive online survey, sponsored by Novartis, assessed glaucoma awareness among adults aged 18 and older. A total of 5,000 people from Australia, France, Germany, Spain and the United States participated (1,000 per country). The study aimed to better understand general knowledge about the disease and personal behaviors relating to eye health, as well as to educate and raise awareness among at-risk populations. The online survey was conducted in May 2016.

A collaborative project of the World Glaucoma Association and World Glaucoma Patient Association, World

Glaucoma Week contributes to the elimination of glaucoma blindness by alerting people to have regular eye examinations.

About Novartis

Novartis provides innovative healthcare solutions that address the evolving needs of patients and societies. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Novartis offers a diversified portfolio to best meet these needs: innovative medicines, cost-saving generic and biosimilar pharmaceuticals and eye care. Novartis has leading positions globally in each of these areas. In 2016, the Group achieved net sales of USD 48.5 billion, while R&D throughout the Group amounted to approximately USD 9.0 billion. Novartis Group companies employ approximately 118,000 full-time-equivalent associates. Novartis products are sold in approximately 155 countries around the world. For more information, please visit <http://www.novartis.com>.

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