

Novartis partners with Philippine Glaucoma Society to help prevent blindness, promote regular eye exams

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- *In line with World Glaucoma Week, Novartis signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Philippine Glaucoma Society to promote awareness on glaucoma and the importance of regular eye examinations, as well as provide continuing medical education to local ophthalmologists*
- *Glaucoma is a worldwide leading cause of irreversible blindness, but public awareness about the condition is low*

Makati City, Philippines, March 12, 2017 – As part of the country's celebration of the 7th World Glaucoma Week on March 12 to 18, research-based Swiss healthcare company Novartis signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Philippine Glaucoma Society (PGS) to promote awareness on glaucoma and the importance of regular eye examinations, as well as provide continuing medical education (CME) to local ophthalmologists.

"Glaucoma, also known as the 'silent thief of sight', is often undetected because it is an almost symptomless eye disease that worsens over time and may lead to blindness. The elderly and people with high eye pressure, family history of glaucoma, and diabetes are at risk. The good news is that if diagnosed early, glaucoma may be controlled," said PGS President Dr. Benjamin Abela, Jr.

"Early diagnosis and treatment is essential, but public awareness on glaucoma and its potential to cause blindness is low. Novartis is privileged to partner with the Philippine Glaucoma Society in promoting awareness on glaucoma and the importance of regular eye examinations done by an eye care professional," said Ms. Cheryl Maley, President & Managing Director, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

A leading cause of blindness, glaucoma affects approximately 60 million people around the world. 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. 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.

Under the MoU, Novartis Healthcare Philippines will provide PGS members with access to CME activities such as Novartis e-congresses and webcasts and logistical support for scientific meetings, lay fora and public awareness campaign through print and broadcast media. Novartis and PGS will conduct these activities for a period of one year.

The Novartis-PGS partnership to promote awareness on glaucoma is timely. A new international survey revealed that the majority of respondents (54%) are unfamiliar with glaucoma. It also showed that 87% of respondents believe regular eye exams are important but only 33% reported having one annually.

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 Novartis-sponsored comprehensive online survey 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.



As part of the country’s celebration of the 7th World Glaucoma Week on March 12 to 18, Novartis Healthcare Philippines signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Philippine Glaucoma Society (PGS) to promote awareness on glaucoma and the importance of regular eye examinations, as well as provide continuing medical education to local ophthalmologists. The signing was held on March 12, 2017 at the Discovery Primea in Makati City. Photo shows (from left) Eleanor Lopez, Novartis Business Franchise Head for Ophthalmology; Christine Fajardo, Novartis Corporate Affairs Head; Cheryl Maley, Novartis President and Managing Director; PGS President Dr. Benjamin Abela, Jr.; PGS Immediate Past President Dr. Joseph Anthony Tumbocon; and PGS Vice President Dr. Margarita Lat-Luna.

About Novartis

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