

Global increase in glaucoma foreseen: early detection could curb rise in global glaucoma cases

By Edward Cornish and Patrick Tucker | Jul 1, 2006 | 366 words, 0 images
THE FUTURIST
July-August 2006

The number of glaucoma sufferers will reach 60 million worldwide by 2010 and will rise again to almost 80 million by 2020, according to research published in the British Journal of Ophthalmology. The condition is the second-leading cause of blindness in the world.

Glaucoma is now viewed as a family of diseases that lead to a buildup in the pressure of the fluid (aqueous humor) inside the eye. The causes of glaucoma are poorly understood, but the disorder often runs in families. The condition can be quickly and painlessly detected by an ophthalmologist or by other professionals using a tonometer or ophthalmoscope.

Experts believe the increase in glaucoma is largely due to the rapid growth in the number of elderly people. About 3% of Americans over the age of 65 are afflicted.

People living in Asia will account for almost half of the new glaucoma cases expected to occur by 2020, according to the report. But the highest ratio of glaucoma sufferers in the adult population will occur in Africa, where 4% of adults older than 40 are expected to have some form of the disease by 2020. According to the report, in the next four years, 8.5 million people will contract primary glaucoma and go blind as a result. That number will rise to almost 11 million by 2020.

Women will be particularly hard hit by the spread of the disease, accounting for six out of 10 new cases.

The damage caused by glaucoma is irreversible, but the condition can be checked with eyedrops or, in more severe cases, surgery. Hence, regular eye examinations are critically important, particularly for people over the age of 40.

Source: The British Journal of Ophthalmology, March 2006. BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JR, United Kingdom. Web site www.bjo.bmjournals.com.

Number of People with Glaucoma, 2010 and 2020

World region	Total population with glaucoma		Ratio of glaucoma to population over 40	
	2010	2020	2010	2020
China	15,782,196	21,824,015	2.66%	3.05%
Europe	12,064,740	13,971,113	2.33	2.40
India	11,944,896	16,088,243	2.55	2.64
Africa	6,458,023	8,359,451	4.32	4.39
Latin America	5,677,158	8,011,575	3.35	3.60
Southeast Asia	4,257,620	6,005,711	2.38	2.56
Japan	2,662,446	3,084,669	3.70	3.96
Middle East	1,618,718	2,295,407	1.47	1.51
World	60,456,796	79,640,184	2.65	2.86

Source: British Journal of Ophthalmology

COPYRIGHT 2006 World Future Society

Copyright 2006, Gale Group. All rights reserved. Gale Group is a Thomson Corporation Company.