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DURING NATIONAL GLAUCOMA AWARENESS MONTH FLORIDA EYE STRIVES TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE SECOND LEADING CAUSE OF BLINDNESS

January 9th, 2013 - Boynton Beach, FL... Glaucoma, ranked nationally as the second leading cause of blindness, is often referred to as the silent thief of night because the disease is a painless condition, and people don't realize they have a problem until they have lost significant amounts of vision. "The only way to monitor for glaucoma is to have annual eye exams," according to Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute's [Jason J. Gorscak, M.D.](#) "This is the only way to prevent vision problems before they begin," says the Refractive Cataract Surgery, Glaucoma & Comprehensive Ophthalmologic Surgeon.

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a group of eye disorders leading to progressive damage to the optic nerve, and is characterized by loss of nerve tissue resulting in loss of vision. The optic nerve is a bundle of about one million individual nerve fibers and transmits the visual signals from the eye to the brain. There are many types of glaucoma and many theories about the causes of glaucoma. The exact cause is unknown, and although the disease is usually associated with an increase in the fluid pressure inside the eye, other theories include lack of adequate blood supply to the nerve. Not everyone with high eye pressure will develop glaucoma, points out Dr. Gorscak, and, "some people with normal eye pressure will develop glaucoma when the pressure inside an eye is too high for that particular optic nerve, based on blood supply to that nerve."

Who is at risk for developing glaucoma?

People with a family history of the disease, African Americans over the age of 40, and Hispanics over the age of 60 are at an increased risk of developing glaucoma. Other risk factors include thinner corneas, chronic eye inflammation, and using medications that may potentially increase the pressure in the eyes

such as steroids. This is why an annual dilated eye examination, especially for people at risk for glaucoma, is so important. And depending on your family history or other risk factors, explains Dr. Gorscak, your doctor may recommend more frequent examinations.

How is glaucoma diagnosed?

Glaucoma is diagnosed through a comprehensive eye examination. To establish a diagnosis of glaucoma, several factors must be present, and because glaucoma is a progressive disease, meaning it worsens over time, a change in the appearance of the optic nerve, a loss of nerve tissue, and a corresponding loss of vision confirm the diagnosis. Some optic nerves have a suspicious appearance, resembling nerves with glaucoma, but the patients may have no other risk factors or signs of glaucoma. These patients should be closely followed with routine comprehensive exams to monitor for change.

How is glaucoma treated?

The treatment of glaucoma is aimed at reducing intraocular pressure, says Dr. Gorscak, and the most common first line treatment of glaucoma is usually prescription eye drops that must be taken regularly. Dr. Gorscak offers his patients the treatment options that are available to them, but he himself believes laser treatment is the most efficient and effective treatment, and that almost any glaucoma patient can benefit from the procedure. “A patient becomes a candidate for laser treatment – specifically SLT – Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty, “if they are inadequately controlled by their glaucoma medications, are sensitive to their current medications, are non-compliant (having trouble getting the drops in their eyes), or if they simply can’t afford long term medication treatments,” says Dr. Gorscak. “Many of our patients opt to go the SLT route because the treatment is less time consuming, the results present themselves quickly, and the procedure is usually covered by insurance.”

The bottom line, says Dr. Gorscak, is early detection, prompt treatment and regular monitoring. “These steps can help to control glaucoma and therefore reduce the chances of progression vision loss,” says Dr. Gorscak. “Glaucoma cannot currently be prevented, but if diagnosed and treated early it can usually be controlled. Medication or surgery can slow or prevent further vision loss. However, vision already lost to glaucoma cannot be restored.”

[Florida Eye Microsurgical Institute](#) offers a full range of comprehensive ophthalmologic care, including routine eye care and examinations, pediatric eye care, dry eyes, advanced corneal, retinal and cataract procedures, laser treatments, glaucoma and diabetic procedures, and various other sophisticated treatments. With its own pediatric wing and [fully accredited outpatient surgical center in Boynton Beach](#), the Institute has additional offices in Boca Raton, Wellington and Juno Beach. Also at Florida Eye with Drs. Gorscak & Schechter is Randy Katz, M.D. specializing in Diabetic Retinopathy, Vitreo-Retina, Retinal Detachment & Macular Degeneration and Lee Friedman, M.D., the Institute's Pediatric, ROP & Adult Strabismus specialist.

Florida Eye is [a premier center for national clinical trial studies](#). For information on current or future studies contact [Debbie Rankin](#) or call (561) 736-5055. For any additional information contact [Gwen Cohan](#) at (561)736-5050.

For the latest eye care news and info on the most current treatments and technologies, follow us on [twitter at @fleyedocs.com](#), [Facebook](#) and sign up to receive our quarterly [newsletter](#).

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