



Eye on Health

Awareness Campaign Asks Seniors: "Do You See What I See?"

(NAPSA)—"Do you see what I see?" For seniors who suffer with an eye disease known as Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) the answer is always "No."

Picture this: a large black hole in the center of your sight that robs you from seeing complete images and eats away at your vision from the inside out. That is what happens for the 10 million Americans who suffer from AMD. AMD is a devastating eye disease and the leading cause of vision loss in people 65 years and older in the United States.

This year, EyeCare America, a public service program of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, is launching an awareness campaign for AMD called "Do You See What I See?" The campaign aims to connect seniors across the U.S. who are at increased risk for the disease with a free eye exam through its AMD EyeCare Program.

People can call the toll-free helpline at (866) 324-EYES (3937) anytime for themselves and/or family members and friends to see if they qualify for a free eye exam and care from one of EyeCare America's 7,100 volunteer ophthalmologists nationwide and to request free AMD educational materials.

"There is no cure for AMD, but early detection and treatment may lessen severe vision loss and slow the progression of the disease," said William Tasman, M.D., chair of EyeCare America's AMD EyeCare Program.

The AMD EyeCare Program is designed for people who have NOT been diagnosed and who:

- Are age 65 and older
- Are U.S. citizens or legal



Normal Vision



Age-related Macular Degeneration

At the left is how you see the world with normal vision. At the right is how 10 million people who suffer from AMD see the world.

residents

- Have not seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years
- Do not belong to an HMO or the VA.

This year-round program promotes annual eye exams for people 65 and older, raises awareness of AMD, provides the latest information about treatment options and low-vision services, offers free AMD educational materials and facilitates access to eye care. The eye exams will be provided by more than 7,100 volunteer ophthalmologists across the U.S. Callers who have not seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years may be eligible to receive a comprehensive medical eye exam and, in most cases, up to one year of care at no out-of-pocket cost for any disease diagnosed during the initial exam.

Eyeglasses, medicines, hospital services and fees of other medical professionals are not included.

What Is AMD?

AMD, also known as macular (MAK-yoo-lar) degeneration, means something is wrong with the central area of the retina known as the macula. The retina is made up of layers of nerve cells

that sense light and allow you to see.

Someone with macular degeneration might be able to see a clock, but not read the numbers, or when talking to you, not recognize your features. However, AMD usually does not damage the side vision, which is what one uses to get around without bumping into furniture or other objects.

What Causes AMD?

Most people who get macular degeneration are over age 50. Usually they lose their central vision slowly over many years. In 10 to 15 percent of affected patients, vision loss is sudden if abnormal blood vessels leak fluid or blood under the retina.

For more than 20 years, EyeCare America has been working with volunteer ophthalmologists across the country to prevent avoidable blindness and helping people see. Since the program's inception in 1985, EyeCare America has served nearly 1 million people.

For more information on AMD or to learn more about EyeCare America's AMD EyeCare Program, visit the organization's award-winning Web site: www.eyecareamerica.org