



MEDIA RELEASE

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Health workers supported to tackle the growing issue of diabetic blindness

One third of people with diabetes develop eye damage and with the growing prevalence of the disease the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and The Fred Hollows Foundation have joined forces to launch a new guide for health professionals.

Diabetic Eye Health: A Guide for Health Professionals was developed to help health professionals care for the rapidly growing numbers of people with diabetes, particularly in low and middle income countries.

The guide for health professionals to prevent and treat blindness caused by diabetes will be launched today at The World Diabetes Congress in Vancouver.

President of the International Diabetes Federation, Sir Michael Hirst said: "The Guide provides practical advice for those working in primary health to support people with diabetes to access vision saving services.

"With increasing numbers of people developing diabetes, it is more important than ever that both health practitioners and patients understand that diabetic retinopathy is largely avoidable, with the right care."

The guide outlines the important role of health professionals in identifying and managing the global problem of diabetic retinopathy and the need for collaboration across diabetes, eye and primary health sectors.

The Guide aims to raise awareness among primary health professionals about the growing prevalence of diabetic eye disease, and provide practical information on the key roles and actions they can take in prevention, screening, monitoring, and referral.

CEO of the Fred Hollows Foundation Brian Doolan said: "Blindness can be avoided with effective diabetes management, regular eye exams, and timely treatment. Ensuring all people with diabetes have access to these important health care services will require a new collaborative approach to providing comprehensive care."

Diabetes and eye health facts:

- One in 11 people has diabetes, 75% of whom live in low and middle income countries.
- If trends continue, at least 1 in 10 adults will have diabetes by 2040.
- Around one third of people with diabetes develop some form of eye damage.
- Diabetic retinopathy is already the leading cause of blindness in working age adults.
- More than 90 million people have diabetic retinopathy, and this number will rapidly rise unless effective action is taken.
- Every person with diabetes is at risk of going blind with diabetic retinopathy, however it can be largely avoided.

The World Diabetes Congress in Vancouver, runs from 30 November – 4 December 2015. For more information, and to download a copy of the Guide, visit: www.idf.org/eyehealth

(The Launch event will be held on 1 December at 5.00pm, Room East 11, Vancouver Convention Centre)

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