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NAEVR SPECIAL REPORT TO THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING

The National Eye Institute (NEI) Responds to the Growing Public Health Problem of Age-related Eye Disease:

Treatments Emerging from Research Reduce Healthcare Costs and Improve Quality of Life

Growing Incidence and Cost of Age-related Eye Disease

The 2000 census reported that more than 119 million people in the United States were age 40 or older, which is the population most at risk for an age-related eye disease. The National Eye Institute (NEI) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) estimates

that currently more than 38 million

Americans age 40 and older experience blindness, low vision or an age-related eye disease, such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, or cataracts. This is expected to grow to more than 50 million Americans by year

2020. The economic and societal impact of eye disease is increasing not only due to the aging of the population, but to its disproportionate incidence in minority populations and as a co-morbid condition of other chronic diseases, such as diabetes.

Although the NEI estimates that the current annual cost of vision impairment and eye disease to the United States is \$68 billion, this number does not fully quantify the impact of direct healthcare costs, lost productivity, reduced independence, diminished quality of life, increased depression and accelerated mortality.

The continuum of vision loss presents a major public health problem and financial challenge to both the public and private sectors.

In public opinion polls over the past 40 years, Americans have consistently identified fear of vision loss as second only to fear of cancer. As a result, federal funding for the NEI is a vital investment in the health—and vision health—of our nation, especially our seniors, as the treatments and therapies emerging from its research can preserve and restore vision.

EYE DISEASE PREVALENCE AND PROJECTIONS (NUMBER OF ADULTS 40 YEARS AND OLDER IN THE U.S.)

	CURRENT ESTIMATES (IN MILLIONS)	2020 PROJECTIONS (IN MILLIONS)
AGE RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION (WITH ASSOCIATED VISION LOSS)	1.8*	2.9
GLAUCOMA	2.2	3.3
DIABETIC RETINOPATHY	4.1	7.2
CATARACT	20.5	30.1

*ANOTHER 7.3 MILLION PEOPLE ARE AT SUBSTANTIAL RISK FOR VISION LOSS FROM AMD

Source: NEI