

Novartis promotes awareness on Dry Eye Syndrome, a common condition among Internet users

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Makati City, November 8, 2017 – Filipinos spend more time on the Internet than people in any of the other 29 countries in Asia Pacific, the Middle East, North America and Europe profiled in the “Digital in 2017 Global Overview” report. Produced by global advertising agency We Are Social and social media management platform Hootsuite, the report shows that the average Filipino Internet user spends 9 hours online each day, with mobile Internet access accounting for more than three and a half of those hours.¹

“It is a welcome development that more Filipinos now have Internet access. Digital connectivity brings many socio-economic benefits such as improved communication, knowledge dissemination and economic opportunities, among others. However, spending too much time online also has its drawbacks,” said Ms. Cheryl Maley, President & Managing Director, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

The prevalence of Dry Eye Syndrome (DES, also known as dry eye disease or simply dry eyes) is increasing worldwide and is now an important public health problem. One reason for the rapid rise in the number of cases of dry eye disease over the last few years is thought to be prolonged visual display terminal (VDT) exposure because of increased computer use. VDT exposure is also becoming common in the general population because of the widespread use of Internet-based mobile technology and portable information terminals, especially smartphones, among all age groups.²

“When we work at a computer or use our smartphone or other portable digital device, we tend to blink our eyes less frequently. This leads to greater tear evaporation and increased risk of DES,” said Dr. Richard L. Nepomuceno, consultant ophthalmologist, Fatima University Medical Center.

Ms. Maley and Dr. Nepomuceno spoke during a media briefing held by Novartis Healthcare Philippines to promote awareness on DES and highlight Systane Ultra Lubricating Eyedrops. Developed by the Novartis eye care division Alcon, Systane Ultra Lubricating Eyedrops are clinically proven to deliver extended protection and high-performance dry eye symptom relief that lasts. Also present during the media briefing held on November 8, 2017 at the Ludo BoardGame Bar and Café in Makati City, were filmmaker and model Janina Manipol and homeschool teacher and mommy blogger Joy Mendoza. The two Systane Ultra brand ambassadors shared their personal experiences on eye care given their busy lifestyles.

DES is a common condition that occurs when your tears are unable to provide adequate lubrication for your eyes. Tears can be inadequate for many reasons. For example, dry eyes may occur if you don't produce enough tears or if you produce poor-quality tears. DES signs and symptoms, which usually affect both eyes, may include a stinging, burning or scratchy sensation in your eyes; stringy mucus in or around your eyes; sensitivity to light; eye redness; a sensation of having something in your eyes; difficulty wearing contact lenses; difficulty with nighttime driving; watery eyes; and blurred vision or eye fatigue.³

To help prevent DES among office workers, call center agents and other individuals who spend long hours

online, experts recommend the “20-20-20 rule”: Look away from the computer/ smartphone/portable digital device screen every 20 minutes, focus on an object 20 feet away, and look at it for at least 20 seconds.⁴ Dr. Nepomuceno also recommends the use of artificial tears, such as Systane Ultra Lubricating Eyedrops, to lubricate dry eyes and help maintain moisture on the outer surface of your eyes.

Systane Ultra is available in all leading drugstores nationwide. For more information about Systane Ultra, visit the Novartis Healthcare Philippines official website, novartis.com.ph or like us on Facebook via [Facebook.com/SystanePH](https://www.facebook.com/SystanePH) or follow @systaneph on Instagram.

About Novartis

Novartis provides innovative healthcare solutions that address the evolving needs of patients and societies. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Novartis offers a diversified portfolio to best meet these needs: innovative medicines, cost-saving generic and biosimilar pharmaceuticals and eye care. Novartis has leading positions globally in each of these areas. In 2016, the Group achieved net sales of USD 48.5 billion, while R&D throughout the Group amounted to approximately USD 9.0 billion. Novartis Group companies employ approximately 119,000 full-time-equivalent associates. Novartis products are sold in approximately 155 countries around the world. For more information, please visit <http://www.novartis.com>.

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1. We Are Social. Digital in 2017 Global Overview. Available at: <https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview>. Accessed November 3, 2017.
2. Dogru M et al. A Field Test of Web-Based Screening for Dry Eye Disease to Enhance Awareness of Eye Problems Among General Internet Users: A Latent Strategy to Promote Health. J Med Internet Res. 2013 Sep; 15(9): e209. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3785952/>. Accessed November 3, 2017.
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