

# Novartis partners with eye specialists to promote awareness on glaucoma, a leading cause of blindness for people over 60

Mar 07, 2021

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Glaucoma is a disease in which fluid builds up in the front part of the eye. The extra fluid increases the pressure in the eye, which damages the optic nerve. Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness for people over 60 years old.<sup>1</sup> Glaucoma usually has no symptoms until it is advanced, but the damage it causes to vision is ongoing and could become irreversible.<sup>2</sup> This is why glaucoma is called the silent thief of sight.

World Glaucoma Week is a global initiative of the World Glaucoma Association (WGA) in order to raise awareness on glaucoma. Through a series of engaging worldwide activities patients, eye-care providers, health officials and the general public are invited to contribute to sight preservation. The goal is to alert everyone to have regular eye (and optic nerve) checks in order to detect glaucoma as early as possible. This year's theme, 'The world is bright, save your sight!', reflects the hope that with regular testing, people continue to see the world around us: full of beauty, charm, and adventure.<sup>2</sup>

"Almost 300,000 Filipinos suffer from glaucoma.<sup>3</sup> Novartis is privileged to partner with the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology and Philippine Glaucoma Society to increase awareness on glaucoma and promote early diagnosis and prompt treatment," said Mr. Jugo Tsumura, President and Managing Director, Novartis Healthcare Philippines, Inc.

"The signs and symptoms of glaucoma vary, depending on the type and stage of the disease. With open-angle glaucoma, the patient may not experience any symptoms that is why there may be a delay in its diagnosis. They may not notice blind spots in their side vision of both eyes, and in the advanced stages of the disease, that is when they are disturbed by their tunnel vision. Common symptoms of acute angle closure attacks include severe headache that may be misdiagnosed as migraine, eye pain, nausea and vomiting, blurred vision, halos around lights, and eye redness<sup>4</sup>," explained Dr. Ma. Margarita Lat-Luna, President, Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology.

"Blindness from glaucoma can often be prevented with early diagnosis and treatment. Having regular eye

exams with an eye specialist is vital, and should include measurements of eye pressure and examination of the optic nerve. The earlier the diagnosis and treatment initiation, the more vision there is to save and the less likely the person will become blind,” stressed Dr. Nilo Vincent Florcruz, President, Philippine Glaucoma Society.

Under their Memorandum of Agreement, Novartis will provide logistical support to the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology and Philippine Glaucoma Society for the production of non-promotional patient education videos on glaucoma. Novartis in cooperation with The Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF) will share the videos in the FHF Lusog Mata Facebook page. The two medical societies will upload the videos in their digital and social media platforms, and show them during lay education activities and other applicable venues.

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1. American Academy of Ophthalmology. “What is Glaucoma?” <https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-is-glaucoma>. Accessed 20 February 2021
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