

# Encourage patients to be glaucoma aware



Jean Tronson gets eye care advice from her pharmacist Lorraine Fletcher

At 90-years-old Jean Tronson is in good health, fiercely independent and enjoys driving herself around town.

However, a few years ago Mrs Tronson had to undergo a cataract operation to correct her vision so she could continue driving.

During this time, her optometrist found she had glaucoma in her left eye.

“I wouldn’t have known I had glaucoma if it wasn’t for the cataract operation, it’s not something you notice,” Mrs Tronson says.

Unfortunately, around half of people with glaucoma in New Zealand don’t even know they have it. It is estimated 68,000 New Zealanders over

the age of 40 have glaucoma, the number one cause of preventable blindness.

July is glaucoma awareness month and Glaucoma New Zealand, the charitable trust set up to eliminate blindness from glaucoma, is calling on pharmacists to encourage their customers to get checked.

Helen Danesh-Meyer, chair of Glaucoma New Zealand, says people should follow the “45 plus 5” rule – a glaucoma eye examination every five years from the age of 45, and then every three years from the age of 60.

Mrs Tronson’s pharmacist Lorraine Fletcher sees about 20 glaucoma patients each week at her Mt Eden Pharmacy.

Mrs Fletcher says the

relationship between a pharmacist and glaucoma patient is very important because there are numerous issues glaucoma patients face.

“The eye drop bottles are so tiny and some of our patients have trouble opening them because they have arthritis.

“There is also an issue of running out each month because the containers are so small and some of the liquid gets spilt.”

Mrs Fletcher asks her patients to demonstrate how they would put the drops in, so she can correct them to help avoid spilling.

She says Glaucoma New Zealand eye drops card will help many patients as it is simple to understand.

For independent patients such as Mrs Tronson, travelling to the pharmacy to pick up her prescription each month is not a hassle. However, there have occasionally been times where she has been caught short, and the pharmacy has delivered her medicine.

“We deliver eyedrops and other medicines to patients in assisted living or retirement centres,” Mrs Fletcher says.

During July, pharmacists, optometrists, ophthalmologists and ASB branches can support the awareness appeal by taking donations for lens cleaning cloths and pens.

More information can be found by visiting [www.glaucoma.org.nz](http://www.glaucoma.org.nz) or phoning 0800 GLAUCOMA (0800 452 826).