

July Annual Awareness Appeal - Press Release

Help Glaucoma NZ to continue to save New Zealanders' sight before it's too late

Imagine not being able to drive, work, play sport, see your family, watch television, read or enjoy any activities that involve your sight. That's the future more New Zealanders will face if knowledge about glaucoma, the leading cause of preventable blindness, drops... or stops.

For 14 years, Glaucoma New Zealand has fought to make glaucoma a highly visible disease so Kiwis know to check their eyesight regularly and prevent blindness.

Glaucoma New Zealand offers services to everyone affected by and concerned with glaucoma; advocating for regular eye checks, educating the public and health professionals, providing support and information to those with a diagnosis of glaucoma and their families, contributing to research and campaigning for low-cost, accessible treatments for glaucoma.

But the support provided to increasing numbers of people diagnosed with glaucoma, from Kaitaia to Bluff, comes at an additional cost. Glaucoma New Zealand receives no government funding for its important work.

"Like any charity, we rely on the generosity of the New Zealand public. But Glaucoma New Zealand needs more support. We have seen a vast increase in the numbers of people diagnosed with glaucoma in the last few years," Glaucoma New Zealand chair Professor Helen Danesh-Meyer says.

About 91,000 New Zealanders (2% of the population!) over the age of 40 have glaucoma and more than half don't know they have it. That means there is a very real possibility they will go completely blind. Worldwide 4.5% of the population has glaucoma – 64 million people – and that's expected to grow to 111.8 million worldwide by 2040².

"Glaucoma is a silent disease, you can be legally blind before you notice the symptoms," Professor Danesh-Meyer says.

Blindness can mean the instant loss of your driver's licence and a massive change to your lifestyle.

"Most people consider their vision as their most precious sense," Professor Danesh-Meyer says.

Potential sponsors and donors can [make a donation](#) via this website or by visiting their nearest ASB Bank branch during July to help Glaucoma NZ continue this work.

Participating optometrists, ophthalmologists and pharmacies will also have Glaucoma NZ collection boxes in July.

1. [Ministry of Health/Healthline 2014](#)
2. [Ophthalmology. 2014 Nov;121\(11\):2081-90. doi: 10.1016/j.ophtha.2014.05.013. Epub 2014 Jun 26.](#)

Further comment:

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