

Your support saves sight

Glaucoma New Zealand is grateful to our members, donors, volunteers, trustees, and growing family of commercial and health partners. Your continued investment is saving sight for people living with glaucoma. Thanks to you, we have increased the number of education sessions and people attending our education and support programmes during 2022.

In January, we launched a new website that has made it easier for patients and health professionals to learn more about glaucoma, share our news and stories, find resources and support, or register for education events. It enabled us to promote and deliver eight online education seminars, with a wide range of topics from nutrition to future technologies. These have been extremely popular, and we will continue the series in 2023.

Health professionals can now refer patients through an online form, find clinic resources, or complete an accredited online education programme on the website. The continued support and feedback from our professional members led to the development of a new



Jas Walia, Pippa, Clara Chan, and Esther Kim

professional education programme, described by participants as 'excellent' and 'clinically relevant.'

Our digital developments didn't stop at a new website. We increased our use of Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to create awareness of the impact of glaucoma. We encouraged new members to learn and gain confidence to manage their disease. We've used content from our education seminars and news articles to reach a new audience to track down the 50,000 Kiwis we suspect are unaware they're living with glaucoma.

Despite Covid disrupting attendance at our support groups and symposiums earlier this year, we were thrilled to deliver the Wellington symposium in September to an audience of 80 guests. At this event, we announced the start of three new

support groups in Kapiti, Wellington, and Taupo.

As a trustee of Eye Health Aotearoa, Glaucoma, New Zealand, is proud to be advocating for a National Eye Health Survey and recently delivered the first Eye Care Situation Analysis Tool (ECSAT) to parliament. It is a template to help all eye health stakeholders understand the system-wide changes needing to occur to provide the kind of eyecare Kiwis deserve.

We are proud to introduce you to the recipients of the 2022 Gordon Sanderson Scholarship. The scholarship is an opportunity to engage with final-year medical students passionate about eye health, research, and glaucoma.

As we receive no government funding, we are grateful to receive

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Glaucoma: an inconvenience, not a disability.

Annie lives life in full vigour, embracing the positive and negotiating the 'inconvenient' all with a healthy dose of good humour and sensitivity. Having raised six children with her husband, Trevor, and lived in 26 houses, her story is testimony to that wonderful saying, "keep on carrying on." She feels that being prepared in case something should happen is like having an insurance policy in your back pocket.

Early 2000's while we were living in Queensland, I noticed my right eye felt funny, a little solid or thick. My regular appointment with my Optometrist was not due for another 5-6 weeks, but I managed an earlier appointment.

My eyes were otherwise healthy, so I had no reason to suspect high pressures, a fast-tracked referral to a glaucoma specialist, and a rapid onset glaucoma diagnosis within a week. It was a huge shock.

My Ophthalmologist was keen to explore what may have caused glaucoma as I have always been very fit, played sports, and eaten a healthy diet. In my younger days, I suffered from hay fever, and in the late 70s, I developed chronic asthma, which was treated with lashings of prednisone. As I couldn't trace glaucoma on either side of my family, the doctor surmised that steroid use was the likely culprit.

An iridotomy, laser treatments, and drops managed glaucoma in my right eye until 2010 when we moved back to New Zealand. Despite more laser treatment and increased eyedrops, the vision in my right eye rapidly deteriorated, while the vision in my left eye was slowly declining.

I had a trabeculectomy on my right eye, and soon after, it was determined that I had lost most of my peripheral vision, and there was nothing more they could do. Keeping sight in my left eye was the priority; however, I wasn't prepared for what came next, which was my biggest lesson.

My iris was attached to the outer lining of my eye. It was a fiercely complex operation, and unfortunately, just bad luck that a large blood clot formed, leaving me completely blind for two weeks. The blood clot eventually dispersed, leaving me with 25% sight in my left eye and a great appreciation for what I would do with it.

Although I have had to adapt, I have found the support and information from Blind Low Vision and Glaucoma New Zealand of enormous benefit. I have joined the BLV committee and look forward to co-facilitating the Taupo Glaucoma Support Group.

If you want to learn more about the Taupo Glaucoma Support Group, please get in touch with Karon at 0800 452 826.

Annie is mindful that no one person has the same experience with glaucoma and graciously shares her story in the hope that some of her 'tips' may prove helpful for someone else.



Annie's Tips:

- Never miss taking your eye drops - not for a minute, not a day, even when touring or traveling overseas. I religiously took mine, and I'm sure it prolonged my sight.
- Purchase a dark-coloured mixing bowl to help see if the butter, eggs, milk, and flour are smooth when baking. Especially helpful when making meringues. Cut onions, parsnips, or potatoes on a dark coloured cutting board
- Watch doorways for changes in floor finish, small steps, or door width.
- Train your family not to move the furniture and to put things away in the same place each time.
- Talk about what you can see, or not see. Others do not easily notice sight loss, especially if we appear to manage well.
- Don't hesitate to ask for help and take it when offered. If not all the time, balance this so that people are there when you need help. Guide them on how to help you. It is a real skill to guide you with a gentle voice or arm. Be patient.

Our thanks to Ann Fogden for sharing her story.

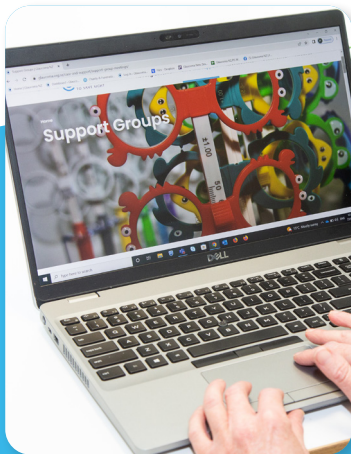
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generous donations from community trusts, regular donors, industry partners, event registrants, and our members. Your support enables us to develop new education and support programmes and resources and continue our free awareness, education, and support initiatives to save sight for New Zealanders.

On behalf of Karon and our Trustees, we wish you and your family all the best for the festive season.

Pippa

General Manager.



Our support groups are growing. See our website for more information.

glaucoma.org.nz/care-and-support/support-group-meetings/

Key nutrients for healthy eye circulation

A strong circulatory system is important to maintain a healthy blood pressure and to distribute nutrients and oxygen around the body. The same is true of circulation into the back of the eye, which is affected by the health of our systemic circulation.

The arteries that come into the back of the eye bring vitamins, minerals, glucose and other nutrients, as well as oxygen into the eye. These are used to repair the eye structures and provide energy to power the cells in the eye. Waste by products of these processes is then removed from the eye through the veins.

Diet and lifestyle can have a profound effect on circulation and maintaining eye health. Here are some key nutrients that can help.

01 Magnesium

This mineral helps to maintain normal blood pressure and helps relax the blood vessels in the eye to help blood flow. Support magnesium levels by increase foods such as green leafy vegetables, avocado, beans and lentils, nuts, seeds and fish.

02 Omega 3 oils

These help to keep our blood free flowing and protects our cells by maintaining the fatty layers that surround them. Increase Omega 3 rich foods like fish, flax and chia seeds, plants oils like olive oil, algae and flax oil. Walnuts are also a great source.

03 Flavonoids

These are phytonutrients found in plant-based foods, including most fruit and vegetables. For example, purple and red coloured fruit and vegetables like berries, blackcurrants, grapes and red cabbage. They are also found in tea, herbs and spices and even dark chocolate. Rich in antioxidants they help protect the body from free radical damage, including the structures in the eye. They also help the circulatory system by toning our veins and arteries that helps smooth blood flow.



Clinicians 
Research Based

EHA takes eye health to Parliament



Dr Elizabeth Craig & Elizabeth Kerekere

On 27 July, Eye Health Aotearoa (EHA) took its campaign for the importance of eye health to Parliament House. They invited MPs and Parliamentary staff to have an OCT scan of their eyes before launching the new, Eye Care in Aotearoa New Zealand 2022 – Eye Care Situation Analysis Tool. (ECSAT) The report was prepared by The School of Optometry and Vision Science at the University of Auckland.

The ECSAT is a tool developed by the World Health Organisation. It provides a “snapshot” of the eye care sector at that time and is designed to address the following key questions:

- What is the current situation of the eye care sector regarding integrated people-centred eye care (IPEC) (strengths, weaknesses, and inequalities)?
- What priority areas need to be addressed in eye care strategic planning?
- What are possible activities to address gaps across the eye care sector?

“We hope we can show MPs the importance of looking after the nation’s vision and reiterate just how desperate the situation is. Eye health and vision care need to be a public health priority,” says EHA spokesperson Dr Justin Mora.

Drew Keys, Regional Program Manager (Western Pacific) International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) spoke at the 27 July 2022 report launch about how Aotearoa New Zealand’s ECSAT report fits into global policy trends. “IAPB congratulates the authors and EHA on this important piece of work. The ECSAT is a foundation of the 2030 In Sight global strategy to see that nobody experiences avoidable sight loss by the end of the decade. As one of the very first developed health economies to conduct an ECSAT, this report well-positions New Zealand to undertake the eye health journey.”

The ECSAT report also provides baseline information for tracking the capacity and performance of the eye care sector. The findings show that New Zealand is doing

well in some areas, but there are a number of areas that need strengthening.

“Thousands of Kiwis lose their sight unnecessarily every year, but we have no idea of the scale of the problem because there is no data on the state of the population’s eye health,” warns Mora.

For a number of years, EHA and others from New Zealand’s eye health sector industry leaders have been campaigning for a National Eye Health Survey, so that the state of the country’s eye health can be properly understood and steps can be taken to prevent avoidable blindness and vision loss. New Zealand is being left behind by the rest of the world with regard to eye health, and more and more Kiwis are losing their sight unnecessarily because of inequity of access to essential eye health and vision care services.

EHA believe the Government is yet to fully recognize the current inequity for New Zealanders in accessing quality and timely eye health and vision care services, to prevent avoidable blindness. They hope that this event will be the start of a policy conversation around the next steps to develop integrated people-centred eye care in New Zealand.



Eye Health
Aotearoa

Glaucoma can be a difficult condition to manage and is the most frequent cause of irreversible blindness worldwide. For patients who require surgery, doctors often face the difficult choice between a treatment that provides highly effective IOP reduction or one with a low risk of complications.

Primary open-angle glaucoma patients and surgeons need a glaucoma device that enables earlier surgical intervention to preserve patient vision.

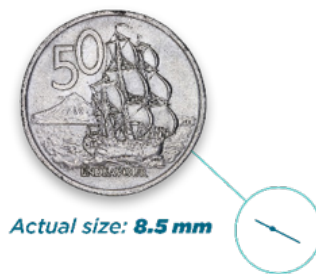
Designed to treat primary open-angle glaucoma, the PRESERFLO® MicroShunt is a tiny, soft, flexible stent that helps drain excess fluid from the eye and may help lower eye pressure and prevent further vision loss.⁵ The PRESERFLO® MicroShunt will not restore vision already lost to glaucoma.

In the pivotal study, the majority (72%) of PRESERFLO® MicroShunt patients were medication-free at 12 months. The study also found that compared with traditional glaucoma surgeries, PRESERFLO® MicroShunt may result in fewer complications after surgery.

Normally, fluid is circulated in the eye to maintain healthy ocular pressure. If the fluid does not drain properly, it builds up and raises the pressure inside the eye. This may damage the delicate tissues around it, potentially leading to permanent vision loss.

The PRESERFLO® MicroShunt is a tiny, soft, flexible stent that helps drain excess fluid from the eye, may lower eye pressure, and prevent further vision loss. The PRESERFLO® MicroShunt will not restore vision already lost to glaucoma.

The PRESERFLO® MicroShunt measures 8.5mm in length and is made from a uniquely biocompatible material called SIBS - Poly(styrene-block-



isobutylene-block-styrene). SIBS material has been safely used in cardiac stent coating for over 15 years.

PRESERFLO® MicroShunt is a permanent treatment option for the management of glaucoma. The device is implanted during an outpatient surgical procedure under anaesthesia.

One end of the PRESERFLO® MicroShunt is inserted in front of the iris, where the excess fluid in the eye resides. The other end is tucked under the clear membrane

surrounding the eye to help drain excess fluid.

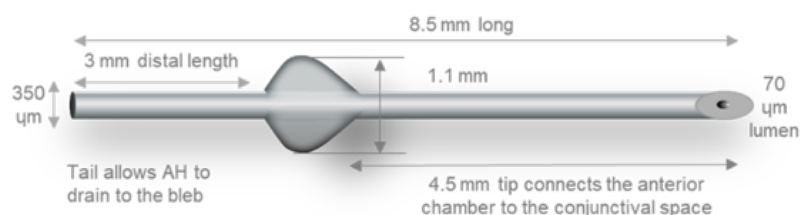
Its size, shape, and fin help keep the PRESERFLO® MicroShunt stable and securely in place, and it is designed to resist degradation over time. The procedure is less invasive than traditional glaucoma surgeries and may take less time to complete.

To prepare for surgery with PRESERFLO® MicroShunt, the surgeon may instruct patients to stop taking their usual medications or to begin taking new ones.

In the first week after surgery, patients may experience symptoms including blurry vision, redness, and/or eye swelling. These symptoms should go away. To help the recovery process, the surgeon may prescribe eye drops. Patients are advised not to rub the eye or perform any strenuous activity, including sports, shortly after surgery.

Additional treatment with medications, such as eye drops, or other glaucoma surgery, may be recommended by the eye surgeon if the eye pressure is not controlled.

If you would like more information about this or other treatments, please talk to your eye specialist.



2022 Gordon Sanderson Scholars



Researching the value of glaucoma education

As one of the recipients of the Gordon Sanderson Scholarship 2022, I am keen to extend my understanding of the association between glaucoma education and patient knowledge with improved treatment adherence. This study aims to ensure patients feel more in control of the management of their condition.

I began volunteering at Glaucoma New Zealand as a clinical educator during my fifth year of medical school at The University of Auckland. My passion for promoting ocular health arose after a family member had been affected by a sight-threatening condition. The lesson learned through this event is that; Vision is priceless, and too often, we take it for granted.

The role of a clinical educator involves communicating with patients effectively to ensure that they are well informed about their condition and potential complications, as well as identifying any obstacles that may be interfering with their medication adherence to support them throughout their journey better. Engaging closely with patients affected by glaucoma has provided me with vast insight into the condition from a patient perspective which is important to understand to improve advocacy for eye health.

– Esther Kim, Volunteer Clinical Educator.

Daniel Zhang will undertake research to determine whether there are any significant morphological brain changes in glaucoma patients, and if they are correlated to clinical outcomes.

Recent studies have shown that glaucoma is associated with not only optic neuropathy, but also post-chiasmal changes in the retino-geniculo-cortical visual pathway. In addition, changes outside of the primary visual pathway have been found to associate with glaucoma, suggesting the disease may be a complex neurodegenerative process. Some studies previously have attempted to utilise limited MRI data for whole brain structure analysis; however, with the small sample size, had limited findings.

The application of more advanced imaging technologies, such as MRI for glaucoma, may lead to a more accurate knowledge of the pathophysiology of glaucoma, earlier diagnosis, and a better evaluation of responses to therapies. If morphological changes in MRI data correlate to known clinical measures, it may show that structural changes reflect glaucoma severity. With enough evidence of correlation, these structural brain changes, which are not limited to the primary visual cortex, may act as another possible biomarker of glaucoma progression in addition to what is used currently.



The gift of regular support.

Thank you to the following community trusts for their support toward the 0800 helpline, education events, and administrative costs.

AD Hally Trust

Ara Lodge No.348IC

Blue Waters Community Trust

Community Organisation
Grant Scheme

Four Winds Foundation

Guy Anson Waddell Charitable
Trust

Lion Foundation

Lottery NZ Community Fund

Maurice Paykel Community
Trust

One Foundation

Pelorus Trust

Pub Charity Ltd

South Canterbury Trusts

Trillian Trust

Vernon Hall Trust Fund



Trevor, John, and Wendy at the North Shore Support Group

Being diagnosed with or having a loved one affected by glaucoma can be daunting, especially if you have vision loss due to advanced glaucoma or you need urgent glaucoma surgery. Support groups can provide peer support from people who understand that glaucoma management is a lifelong pursuit.

The meetings are facilitated by our dedicated volunteers, who organise a range of speakers, including local health professionals, librarians, police, and garden or travel experts. Group members share their experiences of navigating life

with glaucoma to maintain their independence and quality of life.

Check the website for locations, dates, and times of the support group meetings in Christchurch, Auckland Central, Auckland North Shore, Hamilton, Timaru, Kapiti, New Plymouth, and Warkworth. Support groups in Taupo and Wellington will start 2023.

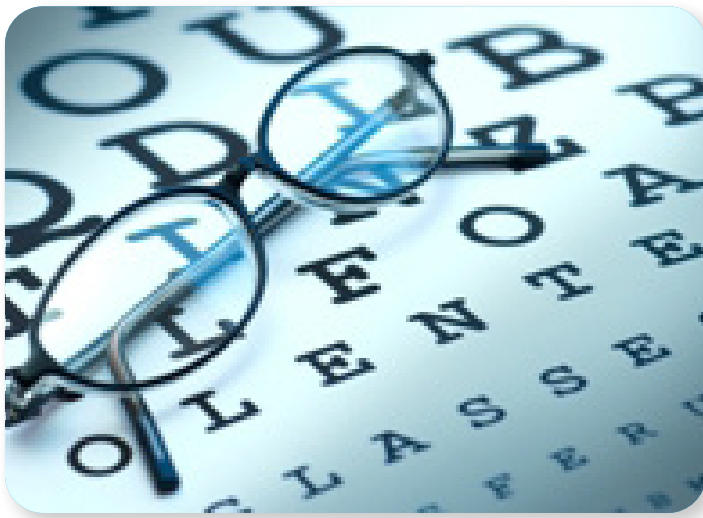
If you would like more information about the support groups or to establish one in your region, please get in touch with Karon. 0800 452 826

Christchurch Support Group does SWELL



Four members of the Christchurch Support Group recently represented Glaucoma New Zealand at SWELL, a community event about Aging Well in Selwyn. This was a great opportunity to raise awareness of the disease, the importance of early detection to reduce the risk of blindness and of treatment compliance to slow disease progression. Our sincere thanks to help spread the word and encourage new members to join the Christchurch Support group.

(From left) Hilary Rayner, Jennifer Hay, Georgina Hallinan, Kathleen Luxon



One to Watch

Could this be the future of administering eye drops? Scientists have overcome the challenges of limited size, wireless operations, and cross-coupling to design an intelligent, integrated wireless theragnostic contact lens capable of in situ monitoring of IOP and on-demand anti-glaucoma drug delivery through the incorporation of two separate moduli. This design is highly compact and minimally invasive, allows a high degree of integration and frequency separation of the curved and limited surface of a contact lens, and provides a promising system for managing glaucoma.

Make a difference

Making a bequest to Glaucoma New Zealand is a powerful way to make a positive difference to the outcomes of those with glaucoma and their families, far beyond your lifetime. As a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation, Glaucoma New Zealand depends on the support of everyday New Zealanders. We are grateful to the many people who have chosen to leave a gift in their will so we may continue our sight saving work.

Glaucoma is the leading cause of preventable blindness in New Zealand; if detected early, treatment can prevent progression and preserve eyesight. It is estimated over 115,000 New Zealanders have glaucoma and as many as half of those do not know they have it. With your help we have the power to change the statistics of preventable blindness from glaucoma by continuing to raise awareness of early detection and treatment compliance.

A charitable bequest is a gift specified in your will and gives you the opportunity to acknowledge the ongoing and vital work of Glaucoma NZ. You can designate a certain sum of money, a particular asset or a portion of your estate.

If you would like to find out more or simply be reassured about the process please call us on 0800 452 826 and ask for our General Manager who will be happy to help.



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Glaucoma is a registered charitable trust and receives no government funding. Our education resources and support programmes are free with the generous support of Glaucoma NZ members. All donations of \$5 and over are tax deductible.

Charities No. CC21421

Prefer to receive your newsletter by email? Please provide an email address to Karon at 0800 452 826 or info@glaucoma.org.nz

Always check with your health professional before trying alternative remedies or supplements.