

Eyelights

July 2026



**Power of
connection**

Give it time

**Awareness in
Action**

Get the most from eye drops



Thank you for being part of this village

Welcome to this edition of *Eyelight*s and thank you for being part of the Glaucoma NZ community.

Over the past few months, I've had the opportunity to meet many of you at our Patient Symposiums around the South Island. What stayed with me most was the willingness of people living with glaucoma to share their own stories, questions and insights. There is a real sense of connection and a genuine desire to learn from one another.

Moments like these are a reminder that Glaucoma NZ is more than an organisation. It is a community of patients, families, volunteers, clinicians, partners and supporters who help one another navigate the challenges of glaucoma.

It truly takes a village to help people live well with glaucoma. Every person who shares their experience, expertise, time or support plays a part in making that possible.

Thank you for being part of that community.

Pippa



Pippa Martin
General Manager

Val's story: My Glaucoma Journey

It all began for me in 2009. My daughter was getting married, and I decided I would like to get some new glasses for her wedding. It was an exciting time.



My optometrist knew I had a family history of glaucoma, and he always checked my optic pressures. This time, he checked my pressure three times! Finally, he said to me, "The pressures in your eyes are extremely high, and you need to see an ophthalmologist urgently." My pressures were 39 and 40.

For ten years, I chose to see an ophthalmologist privately. I didn't have medical insurance, but I was still working. Everything was going along tickety-boo, and the specialist was happy with how things were going.

When we moved to the Bay of Plenty, I chose to transfer to the public hospital system for my glaucoma checkups.

I was diligent with using my eye drops twice daily and didn't have any problems with the two drops I was prescribed. No problems for about 13 years until I was changed on to a different combination eye drop which slowly made my eyes very sore and I noticed a change in light sensitivity. My pressures were still quite high.

About two years ago my stable glaucoma journey changed and I had the SLT (Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty) procedure and this was not effective in lowering my pressures. A cataract operation followed about three months later in the hope that the thinner,

artificial lens would help reduce the pressure in my problem eye.

But I was miserable with a sore, red eye that people would remark on. I was told I had Dry Eye Syndrome. I tried lots of things but even with frequent use of moisturising eye drops my left eye remained troublesome.

“The more we learn about this condition, the better prepared we are to help ourselves.”

Val Thompson 5 December 2025

I felt something wasn't right with my eyes.

Then in June 2024, I went to a Glaucoma NZ patient education event in Tauranga and joined Glaucoma New Zealand. I also volunteered to become involved with re-starting the Tauranga Glaucoma Support Group.

I discovered there is so much to learn about Glaucoma on their website. I have learned so much and watched lots of the webinars about glaucoma. The more we learn about this condition, the better prepared we are to help ourselves. We also learn a lot by sharing with one another.

In August 2025, I had a Trabeculectomy operation on my left eye, and I am pleased to report that my left eye is now feeling much more comfortable, and I am happy with my progress.

Wiri's story: Give it time

The days and weeks after a trabeculectomy can feel unsettling. That's something Wiri Koia understands from experience.

Almost 80-years-old and recently retired, Wiri spent many years driving buses in New Zealand and Australia. Last year, after his eye pressure rose to dangerous levels, he travelled from Gisborne to Waikato Hospital for a trabeculectomy.

Before surgery, he was prescribed Diamox tablets to help bring the pressure down.

“I've never felt so crook,” he recalls.

The surgery successfully lowered the pressure in his eye, but recovery wasn't immediate.

For the first few weeks after surgery, Wiri's vision wasn't great. As the weeks passed, he started getting a bit scared. It wasn't until around three months later that he began to believe his eyes were coming right.

“Don't expect a miracle,” he says. “It takes time to heal.”

Wiri says he's always felt well supported in Gisborne and doesn't hesitate to seek advice if something doesn't seem right.

“If I get worried, I just drop in to my local optometrist.”

Looking back, he hopes others won't lose heart if recovery feels slower than expected.

“Don't panic,” he says. “Give it time.”



DONATE TODAY

Help provide information and support to others living with glaucoma.

Visit glaucoma.org.nz/donatenow
or call 0800 452 826



Awareness in Action

Thanks to the support of our partners, donors and Round the Bays participants, more New Zealanders took steps to protect their sight during Glaucoma Awareness Month 2026.



The Impact

500+ people
received a Gift of Sight
voucher for an eye
health check

116 helpline calls
received during March
(more than double the
previous year)

41,066 website visits
during the campaign
(almost three times last
year's result)



**Thank you to our sponsors below
for helping turn awareness into action.**



The power of connection

Over seven stops across the South Island, Glaucoma New Zealand's recent Patient Symposiums brought together people living with glaucoma, eye-care professionals and supporters to learn more about glaucoma and its management.

Attendees came with a wide range of experiences. Some had been diagnosed recently, while others had been living with glaucoma for many years. Many were looking for a better understanding of their condition and the opportunity to ask questions of specialists and fellow patients.

“I have had glaucoma 15 years and after attending this event I now understand what it is.”

Symposium attendee

For Glaucoma NZ General Manager Pippa Martin, the symposiums reinforced the importance of creating opportunities for people to access trusted information and support.

“We heard how the uncertainty of living with a progressive disease like glaucoma impacts people, and why understanding what is happening is so important in helping to alleviate some of that stress,” she says.

Attendees were particularly interested in hearing about developments in glaucoma care and treatment, including approaches that may not have been available when they were first diagnosed. Many also valued the



opportunity to hear different perspectives from both specialists and others living with glaucoma.

The symposiums also provided an opportunity for Glaucoma NZ to meet with local optometrists and raise awareness of education and support programmes, including SiGHTWiSE, helping to connect more people with trusted information and support.

Our sincere thanks go to the speakers who generously shared their time and expertise: Dr Antony Suter, Dr Dickson Wong, Dr Paul Baddeley, Dr Rahul Dwivedi, John West, Catherine van Paassen, Martyn Crossley, Clare McKinlay, MinHee Shim, Hunter Hill and Tui Homer.

We are also grateful to the Freemasons Foundation, our donors and supporters whose generosity helps make these events possible.

Patient Symposiums will continue throughout 2026, with upcoming events planned for New Plymouth, Palmerston North and Rotorua on September 10th, 11th and 12th respectively.

Getting the most from your eye drops



Glaucoma eye drops play an important role in protecting sight. Using them correctly helps ensure the medication can do its job of lowering eye pressure and protecting your vision.

One drop is enough

Glaucoma bottles are designed so that one drop is all your eye can hold. If you're not sure the drop went in, it's fine to try again.

Give the drop time to work

After putting in your eye drop, gently close your eye and press the inner corner near your nose for two minutes. This helps keep the medication in your eye and reduces drainage into the rest of the body.

Wait between different drops

If you use more than one type of eye drop, wait at least five minutes before putting in the next one. This helps prevent the first drop from being washed away.

Need extra support?

Many people find eye drops challenging, particularly if they have arthritis, reduced hand strength or difficulty aiming the bottle. If you find the process frustrating, you're not alone. A few small adjustments can often make eye drops easier to manage.

Glaucoma NZ has information about eye drop aids and other practical resources that may help make daily eye drop use easier.

Prefer to see the technique demonstrated? Scan the QR code to watch our step-by-step eye drop video and learn more about eye drop aids available through Glaucoma NZ.



Helping people live well with glaucoma takes a community effort.

We are grateful to the trusts, foundations and partners whose support helps make this work possible.

We sincerely thank:

- AbbVie
- AD Hally Trust(PG)
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- Invercargill Licensing Trust (ILT)
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- New Zealand Community Trust
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Remembering two valued members of our community

Glaucoma NZ was founded on the belief that no one should face glaucoma alone. For many years, John Talbot and Scott White helped bring that belief to life through their generosity, kindness and commitment to supporting others.



John Talbot

John Talbot was a dedicated leader and friend within the Auckland North Glaucoma Support Group.

For more than five years, he served as a co-facilitator, generously sharing his time, knowledge and encouragement with members navigating life with glaucoma and sight loss. His interest in glaucoma research and emerging treatments was appreciated by many, and members valued his thoughtful approach to helping people better understand their condition.

By his family's account, John valued facts, good manners and connecting people with causes that mattered. He had a gift for identifying what needed to be done and ensuring it was carried out to the highest standard.

Anyone who attended the Auckland North Support Group will remember John's genuine interest in others, his wise counsel and his willingness to help people feel more informed and confident about living with glaucoma.

Glaucoma NZ is a registered charitable trust (No. CC21421) that receives no government funding. Education resources & support are free thanks to the generosity of Glaucoma NZ members. Donations of \$5 and over are tax deductible.

Through his service, guidance and friendship, John helped countless people feel more supported and connected. His contribution continues to be felt in the community he helped nurture.

We remember John with gratitude and extend our sincere condolences to his family and loved ones.



Scott White

Scott White served as co-facilitator of the Auckland Central Glaucoma Support Group from 2018 to 2022.

Although he worked full-time as an accountant, Scott generously dedicated one Saturday each month to supporting group members and helping create a welcoming space where people felt comfortable sharing their experiences and asking questions.

Known for his warmth, kindness and wonderful sense of humour, Scott had a natural ability to put people at ease. For many members, attending a support group for the first time can feel daunting, but Scott's friendly manner helped people feel welcome from the moment they walked through the door.

Many members will remember the way Scott made everyone feel heard and valued, as well as the genuine interest he took in their wellbeing. They will also remember the special social occasions he organised, including a much-loved gathering at a local Japanese restaurant that brought people together beyond the support group setting.

Scott's compassion, generosity and friendship helped strengthen the sense of community that remains such an important part of Glaucoma NZ today. The welcoming and supportive environment he helped create continues to benefit others.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to Scott's family and loved ones.

Glaucoma New Zealand | Department of Ophthalmology,
The University of Auckland Private Bag 92019 Auckland 1142
FREEPHONE 0800 GLAUCOMA (452 826)
