



spotlight on health

A Milestone For Patients With Glaucoma

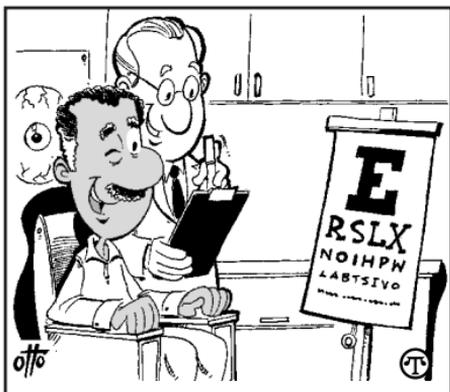
(NAPSA)—There is good news on the medical front. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently approved the prescription eye drop Xalatan® (latanoprost ophthalmic solution) as an initial treatment to lower elevated eye pressure (IOP) in patients with primary open angle glaucoma and ocular hypertension.

“Recent studies have highlighted the importance of lowering and controlling eye pressure in patients with open-angle glaucoma or ocular hypertension,” said Robert Fechtner, M.D., Professor of ophthalmology and Director of the Glaucoma Division, UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School. “Elevated eye pressure represents a major risk factor for vision loss with glaucoma—the higher the level of eye pressure, the greater the likelihood of optic nerve damage and visual field loss.”

Prior to the recent FDA action, Xalatan was approved for use in patients whose eye pressure could not be controlled by another medication or who may be at risk for side effects associated with other prescription eye drops, such as beta-blockers. Studies have shown that beta-blockers are associated with some kinds of cardiovascular problems and breathing issues in some elderly patients.

“Eye pressure-lowering beta-blocker eye drops are contraindicated in patients with asthma or certain heart conditions,” Dr. Fechtner added. “Such patients were often candidates for Xalatan. Now that it is approved for initial use, patients can begin treatment at the appropriate time with this highly effective IOP-lowering eye drop.”

Glaucoma affects approximately 67 million people world-



wide and can gradually steal sight without warning and often without noticeable symptoms.

The first-line approval of Xalatan was based on five years of reported safety data. It is the only drug of its class with such extensive safety data. Since its introduction in 1996, it has become the number-one prescribed IOP-lowering medication in the United States.

Xalatan is related to a class of compounds called prostaglandins and appears to act locally in the eye to increase drainage of fluid and reduce eye pressure. Xalatan can slowly cause an increase in the amount of brown eye color, can darken eyelids and eyelashes, and increase the growth of eyelashes of the treated eye. Color changes can increase as long as Xalatan is administered; eye color changes are likely to be permanent. The most commonly reported side effects in eyes of patients treated with Xalatan in clinical studies include blurred vision, burning and stinging, eyelid redness, the feeling that something is in the eye, eye itching, darkening of eye color and irritation of the clear front part surface of the eye.

For more information on glaucoma, call 1-800-691-6813 or log on to: www.glaucomainfo.com.