

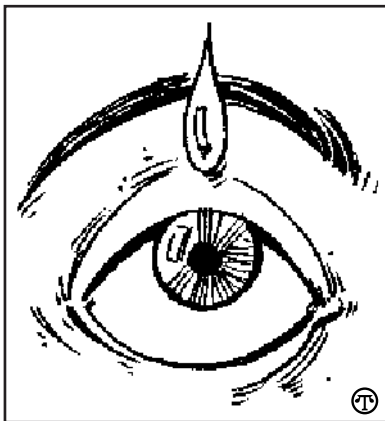
Study Finds Eye Drops Delay Onset of Glaucoma

(NAPSA)—A new study from the National Eye Institute (NEI) shows for the first time that the same prescription eye drops now used to treat glaucoma can help delay the onset or possibly prevent glaucoma in people diagnosed with elevated eye pressure. Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the U.S.

The five-year study divided 1,636 people with elevated eye pressure into two groups: half who received glaucoma medication and half who did not. Researchers found that the development of open-angle glaucoma was reduced by more than 50 percent in patients treated with pressure-lowering medication compared to those not treated. The study also found that those in the treated group had their eye pressure reduced by about 20 percent.

It is estimated that between three and six million people in the U.S. have elevated eye pressure and are at increased risk for developing primary open-angle glaucoma—the most common form of the disease.

Elevated eye pressure occurs when fluid in the eye does not drain properly. The resulting elevated pressure can damage the optic nerve and prompt a diagnosis of glaucoma. Over time this damage can result in a loss of side or peripheral vision. Vision loss caused by glaucoma cannot be regained. If left untreated, blindness can result. Eye doctors seek to identify patients with elevated pressure early to determine



whether treatment with glaucoma medication is appropriate.

Glaucoma generally has no symptoms, but early detection can usually control the disease and prevent serious vision loss. A number of risk factors were found to be associated with the development of glaucoma in study participants. These included personal risk factors, such as older age and African descent, as well as higher eye pressure, optic nerve characteristics and thinness of the cornea.

According to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness among African-Americans. The NEI recommends that people over the age of 60 and African-Americans over the age of 40 get comprehensive eye exams. For more information about the NEI study, visit www.nei.nih.gov/glaucomaeyedrops. Additional information about glaucoma or other eye diseases can also be found at www.myhealthyeyes.com.