



PRESS RELEASE

To: News Editors & Directors

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER IS DIABETIC EYE DISEASES AWARENESS MONTH

More Than Five Million Americans at Risk of Losing their Vision from Diabetes Related Eye Problems, Including Cataracts

(Honolulu, Hawaii), November 15, 2006- In the United States, diabetes and its related eye diseases remain the leading cause of vision loss and blindness. For the over half of all diabetes patients who are at-risk to develop diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma or cataracts, these eye problems can be prevented with proper screening and treatment.

Cataracts, though common with age, occur more frequently and at a younger age in individuals with diabetes. If not properly treated, cataract can lead to severe vision loss.

“With diabetes, we like to recommend a yearly exam to make sure our patients do not develop cataracts and diabetic retinopathy,” said Hawaiian Eye Center Medical Director Christopher Tortora, M.D. “Every year up to 15% of cataract surgery performed is on diabetics.”

Cataract is a disease of the eye’s lens, where the lens becomes cloudy thereby impairing vision, or, if left untreated, ultimately causing blindness. The most common type of cataract is senile cataract, which often begins as a discoloration of the lens, and as the area affected increases, the patient will experience increasingly distorted and blurry vision.

Diabetes can increase the risk of senile cataract by 40% due to high blood sugar content in the body. Diabetics are also at high-risk for diabetic retinopathy which occurs when abnormal blood vessels form in the eye. Diabetic retinopathy can be controlled if caught early, usually preventing serious vision loss or blindness. An annual eye exam is essential for all diabetics.

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“In addition to yearly screenings, the best thing diabetes patients can do is to pay close attention to their blood sugar levels and be proactive in keeping these levels under control,” Dr. Tortora said. “Combining regular ophthalmology visits with regular visits to their primary care physician, diabetics can drastically reduce their tendency toward developing a diabetes related eye disease.”

Dr. Tortora, a board certified ophthalmologist, is host of The Hawaiian Eye Show, a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision. He and his colleagues at Hawaiian Eye Center are committed to educating the public about the importance of preventive eye care. To learn more about other eye health issues, please call Hawaiian Eye Center at 621-8448 where *“life has never looked better.”*

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