



PRESS RELEASE

TO: Editor in Charge

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DATE: April 9, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COLOR BLIND

Can you tell the Difference between Red and Green?

(Honolulu, Hawaii), April 9, 2012 – Living in Hawaii, we are surrounded by beautiful, vibrant colors, from the trees to the ocean, from the sky to the lava. But, those vibrant colors are not a luxury for everyone, specifically someone who is color blind. To suffer from color blindness generally means that a person has trouble deciphering the difference between certain shades of certain colors. Common forms of color blindness make it hard to distinguish certain shades of reds from shades of green. It is very rare that a person would not be able to see color at all. Color blindness is also referred to as a color vision defect. Color blindness affects men more commonly than women, with about 7 percent of the male population (about 10.5 million men) in the United States affected and only about 0.4 percent of the female population.

In the eye there are three types of color receptor cells, known as cone cells. Different cone cells can sense red, green, or blue light. They work together to allow us to see all other colors and shades. Cone cells are mostly found in the macula, the central part of the retina in the eye.

Many color vision problems are present at birth and are inherited (genetic). People who experience inherited color blindness do not have the types of cone cells that sense a certain color or may have cells which do not work properly. Most of the time, people can differentiate between different colors, but can not tell subtle differences in shades of color. Occasionally, people have defects that do not allow them to see one color at all. This type of color vision problem will not change over time.

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There are other ways that a person can experience color vision problems. Color vision problems can also occur through aging, or from eye problems such as glaucoma, macular degeneration, cataracts, or diabetic retinopathy, or from an eye or head injury, or even as the side effect of a medication.

Symptoms of a color vision deficit vary. Sometimes, people may not know that they are affected by a color vision deficit because they may see many colors and may not know that they see color differently from normal. There are only rare cases in which there is total color blindness in which a person could only see white, gray and black.

Many people have had or seen the types of tests that are used in order to diagnose a color vision problem. The tests most commonly measure how well a person can identify colors. In one of the tests, an eye doctor will show the patient cards that are covered with colored dots in different colors. People who are color blind can not usually see the pattern in the dots, often a number or a letter. Another test for color blindness is to have the patient arrange colored cards or blocks based on the similarities of the colors. People who suffer from a color vision problem find it difficult to arrange the colored pieces in the correct order.

There are certain jobs which require a color vision test to qualify for the job. Often, people only learn they have a color vision deficit when they are applying for one of these types of jobs. There is also evidence that certain forms of color blindness can affect a child's ability to learn. If you have questions about your color vision, ask your eye specialist about it.

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 preventative eye care. To learn more about a variety of eye health issues, please call the Hawaiian Eye Center at 621-8488 where *"life has never looked better."*

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