



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Photo Attached*



## **Glaucoma in Focus**

***January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month***

(Honolulu, Hawaii), January 9, 2014 – Glaucoma affects nearly 3 million Americans aged 40 and over and is one of the leading causes of blindness, according to Prevent Blindness America. Glaucoma is a group of diseases that cause damage to the optic nerve, which is located at the back of the eye and responsible for sending images from the eye to the brain. January serves as National Glaucoma Awareness Month to remind those most at risk to get regular checkups from their eye care professional.

“The scary thing about glaucoma is that, in most cases, there are no symptoms until the disease has progressed to an advanced stage,” said Dr. Christopher Tortora, M.D., medical director of the Hawaiian Eye Center and Dry Eye Clinic. “As with many other eye diseases, the key with glaucoma is early detection to help prevent vision loss.”

Glaucoma typically occurs because of a buildup of pressure in the eye (intraocular pressure). This is due to either overproduction of fluid in the eye or blockage in the eye’s drainage area (trabecular meshwork) where the cornea and iris meet. Glaucoma can also occur in those with normal eye pressure and is believed to be a result of poor blood flow to the optic nerve.

The two main types of glaucoma are open-angle and angle-closure. Open-angle glaucoma is the most common form of the disease and progresses slowly over time because fluid in the eye is not draining properly. Angle-closure glaucoma is less common but progresses quickly with a painful, sudden buildup of pressure in the eye because the angle of the drainage area is too narrow.

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Gradual loss of peripheral vision is a common symptom of open-angle glaucoma but usually goes unnoticed until later stages of the disease. Angle-closure glaucoma symptoms are more abrupt and include severe eye pain, headache, nausea and vomiting, blurred vision, seeing haloes around lights and red eye.

People most at risk of developing glaucoma include those:

- Aged 40 and over
- Of Hispanic or African-American descent
- With a family history of the disease
- Diagnosed with diabetes
- Who've had an eye injury or eye surgery
- With extreme nearsightedness (myopia)
- Taking steroid medications for an extended period of time

Most of the risk factors for developing glaucoma cannot be prevented, and the optic nerve does not regenerate itself. However, glaucoma can be successfully controlled with an early diagnosis and treatment to slow down or stop further damage.

Glaucoma can be treated with a variety of methods from eye drops to laser surgery to microsurgery. The main objective of these treatments is either to decrease the amount of fluid produced by the eye or clear the blockage in the drainage area.

Everyone 40 and over should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam every two to three years from their eye care professional to check for glaucoma and other eye diseases. Individuals most likely to develop glaucoma should get an eye exam once a year, including those 40 and over with other risk factors or 60 and over.

*Dr. Christopher Tortora, a board certified ophthalmologist, is host of "The Hawaiian Eye Show," a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision broadcast live every Saturday at 8 a.m. on KHVH 830 AM/rebroadcast at 9 p.m. on KHBZ 990 AM. He and his colleagues at the 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 621-8448 or visit [www.HawaiianEye.com](http://www.HawaiianEye.com) and [www.Facebook.com/HawaiianEyeCenter](http://www.Facebook.com/HawaiianEyeCenter), where "life has never looked better."*

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