

For Immediate Release:  
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Dear Editor:

January is National Glaucoma awareness month. Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that gradually steal sight without warning. Although the most common forms primarily affect the middle-aged and the elderly, glaucoma can affect people of all ages.

There are more than 4.2 million U.S. adults who have glaucoma, but only half know it, according to the National Institutes of Health.

The second-leading cause of blindness in the world, glaucoma accounts for 12 percent of blindness in the United States.

The best defense against glaucoma is early detection, advises Dr. Ronald Frenkel, Glaucoma specialist in Stuart.

Knowing you have glaucoma is one of the most important factors in treating the disease and preventing vision loss, says Frenkel. So many people are losing their sight and simply do not realize it. Glaucoma is a treatable disease. Vision loss can be minimized. Those who are potentially at risk must take the first step and get an eye exam.

Those at high risk for glaucoma include:

- . B African-Americans older than 40.
- . B Hispanics.
- . B People with a family history of glaucoma.
- . B Anybody older than 60.
- . B Those with adverse health conditions, such as diabetes.
- . B Those who have experienced a serious eye injury.
- . B Those who are severely nearsighted

I participate as a volunteer in a program to help those without insurance. If you lack health insurance, you may be eligible for a free exam through the EyeCare America program of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. For further information call 1-800-391-3937 or go to [eyecareamerica.org](http://eyecareamerica.org).