

## UC San Diego Ophthalmologist Joins International Awareness Effort At First-Ever World Glaucoma Day

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Kimberly Edwards

Glaucoma is often described as "the silent blinding disease." That's precisely why a University of California, San Diego Distinguished Professor is helping to deliver a very loud message to Capitol Hill: Blindness caused by glaucoma can be prevented.

As President of the American Glaucoma Society (AGS), Robert N. Weinreb, M.D., Distinguished Professor of Ophthalmology, UC San Diego School of Medicine and Director, Hamilton Glaucoma Center, will carry that message to Congress for the first-ever World Glaucoma Day, Thursday, March 6, 2008.

"Diagnosis and appropriate treatment of glaucoma can avoid blindness in most patients," said Weinreb. Weinreb is a world-renowned clinician, surgeon and scientist whose research and innovations in the diagnosis and treatment of glaucoma have been implemented worldwide.

Glaucoma is a progressive disease of the optic nerve that results in the loss of vision. Higher levels of eye pressure indicate increased likelihood of glaucoma. Known as the "sneak thief of sight," untreated glaucoma progresses, without warning or symptoms obvious to the patient, and may lead to blindness. Almost 3 million Americans have glaucoma and there are as many individuals with glaucoma who do not know they have it, particularly in the underserved minority populations.

In an effort to help raise awareness, The United States House of Representatives has declared March 6, 2008 World Glaucoma Day to enhance public awareness and improve patient education as well as recognize the importance of supporting glaucoma research.

Every American over the age of 60 is at risk, especially those in minority populations. According to the American Glaucoma Society, glaucoma is the leading cause of irreversible vision loss in both African Americans and Hispanics. And African Americans have a three times greater risk of developing this disease than Caucasian Americans.

Early detection is the key to treating and preventing vision loss and blindness, yet millions of patients do not even realize they have the disease. Those with known risk factors, including those over the age of 40, African-Americans, Hispanics, and anyone with a family history, should receive regular eye examinations which include evaluation of the optic nerve and measurement of eye pressure.

For more information on World Glaucoma Day, please visit: <http://www.wgday.net/>

About UC San Diego Shiley Eye Center

From basic eye exams to the most advanced diagnostic tests and sophisticated surgery, the physicians and staff at the UC San Diego Shiley Eye Center provide comprehensive eye care at one convenient location.

In 2003, the Hamilton Glaucoma Center was built to support the cutting edge glaucoma research behind the outstanding patient care provided by Shiley Center physicians.

Weinreb, director of the Hamilton Glaucoma Center, has been listed in the "Best Doctors in America" for the years 1992-2008 and has published more than 1,000 scientific publications. He also has served as President of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (2002-2003) and President of the World Glaucoma Association (WGA) (2004-2006). He also is President of the American Glaucoma Society (2007 - 2009).

Media: Dr. Weinreb will be available for interviews while in Washington, D.C., via phone or in person. Please see media contacts to make arrangements.

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