



Alarming incidence of eye disease among children and seniors despite increased numbers of eye exams

OTTAWA, May 15, 2018 – Despite a majority of Canadians reporting that they have been for an eye exam in the last year, research commissioned by the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) points to an alarming incidence of eye disease among children and seniors.

Last month, CAO commissioned Nanos Research to conduct a survey to determine Canadians' access to eye health and vision care. Among Canadians who serve as caregivers for children or seniors, they most often reported they took them to an optometrist for their eye care versus other health or vision care providers. Of those who received care, one in five children and two in three seniors were found to have an eye disease or condition (other than a prescription for glasses or contact lenses) during the eye exam.

For children, lazy eye (amblyopia) or crossed eyes (strabismus) were examples of previously undiagnosed eye disease. The earlier amblyopia is diagnosed and treated, the greater the chance for a complete recovery. If left untreated, it can lead to blindness in the affected eye. Similarly, strabismus can be corrected, but left untreated, can lead to non-use of the eye and amblyopia. There are nearly six million seniors in Canada, a number which is expected to double by 2061.¹ Eye diseases detected among seniors included cataracts, glaucoma, retinal disorders and age-related macular degeneration, all of which are age-related and can lead to loss of vision if left untreated.

“Over the past two decades, Canadian optometrists have spent more than \$26 million dollars to raise awareness about eye health and vision care. While satisfying to see that our efforts to encourage Canadians to get their eyes checked is bearing some fruit, we are disturbed at the incidence of disease that these exams are uncovering,” says Dr. Michael Dennis, President of the Association. “The study confirms Canada’s emerging crisis in eye health – especially among the senior population - and the need for a strong federal presence to make eye health and vision care a population health priority.”

An eye exam performed by an optometrist is like a physical for your eyes; it looks at the entire eye and visual system. In addition to detecting eye diseases and disorders, it can also detect other health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure and brain tumors.

¹Statistics Canada/Census 2016

About the Canadian Association of Optometrists

The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) is the national voice of optometry, dedicated to collaboratively advancing the highest standard of primary eye care through the promotion of optimal vision and eye health. For more information, go to opto.ca.

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