

# GLAUCOMA WATCH

**“Make eye health services available to the most vulnerable in the region”**

An appeal has been made for Caribbean Governments to make eye health services affordable to the bottom fifty (50%) of their populations.

In a message to mark World Glaucoma Week, the Chief Executive Officer of the **Caribbean Council for the Blind (CCB)**, Arvel Grant, noted that in the wake of the current global financial crisis, regional governments must give those most at risk access to eye health services within the public sector.

*“Since poverty and under development are leading contributors to blindness and visual impairment, the current global financial crisis, demands that Caribbean Governments take extraordinary steps to give the bottom 50%*

*of their populations access to eye health services in the public health sector, creating higher levels of: accessibility, availability and affordability to those most at risk”*

*“Based on the findings of the Barbados Eye Study, up to seven percent (7%) of Caribbean populations could be affected by Glaucoma. That means that (in the English-speaking Caribbean alone) up to four hundred and twenty thousand (420,000) persons could be affected by the condition”.*

According to Mr Grant, one way of facilitating that national habit, is by *“encouraging the development of programmes to make eye glasses more affordable, accessible and available. Given the high prevalence of persons (over 35) requiring spectacles, to see normally, such a service, represents a valid “gateway” opportunity for regular eye examinations”* he said.

Open Angle Glaucoma is a leading cause of incurable blindness in the Caribbean. Persons who are: thirty

five (35) years or older; have had injury to one or both eyes; are of African descent; has one or more parent or grandparent diagnosed with Glaucoma, are at enhanced risk of developing the condition.

Individuals having one or more of those risk factors, should have their eye examined for Glaucoma (at least) once every year, or as often as their Ophthalmologists recommend.



**ANTIGUA & BARBUDA** : Dr Genalin Ang examines a patient at the Fiennes Institute in St John's, Antigua and Barbuda



**ST LUCIA** : Patient being examined at the Eye Clinic located at St Lucia Blind Welfare Association .



**JAMAICA** : Joyce Williams - a Glaucoma patient visiting the Eye Clinic at the Mandeville Regional Hospital .

## Glaucoma - a significant public health problem

The only way to tackle the challenge of Glaucoma in the developing world is to deal with poverty and the lack of resources.

This is the view of Dr. Richard Wormald, one of the world's leading Consultant (Ophthalmologist) on Glaucoma and of London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, University College London and Moorfields Eye Hospital.

*"It's the lack of awareness, the lack of manpower, deprivation (and the) lack of resources and that's something we can fix, if we want to stop people going needlessly blind. It's a big problem; millions lose their sight avoidably around the world; it is the form of irreversible blindness and a form of blindness that is treatable. We can stop it; we know that now. Remember that the impact of sight loss from Glaucoma is very much more severe than many of the other causes of so called blindness..."* he stated.

Dr. Wormald made this disclosure during his presentation on "Diagnosing and treating Glaucoma (a summary of the known science)" to delegates attending the Caribbean Vision 2020 (The Right to Sight) meeting in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011.

Dr. Wormald also emphasised that Glaucoma should be recognised as a significant Public Health problem. "We have to get the public health officials to recognize what it is...."

The Caribbean Vision 2020 (The Right to Sight) Meeting was hosted by the **Caribbean Council for the Blind** (and The Foundation for Eye Care in the Caribbean (CCB/ Eye Care Caribbean), with financial support from Sightsavers and the European Union .

The consultations saw the full participation of officials from Ministries of Health and Civil Society Organisations from thirteen (13) countries; and presentations on various issues pertaining to Eye Health and the delivery of programmes in the region. The Strategic Framework for Vision 2020: The Right to Sight – Caribbean Region (2010), was also introduced.

### Video



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bESxaVpoyC8>

Delegates at the Caribbean Vision 2020 (The Right to Sight) Meeting held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago



# GLAUCOMA PATIENTS : THEIR STORIES

**In Sickness and in Health**



George and Sylvia Blythe both lost their vision due to Glaucoma. They live in the town of Savanna-la-Mar in the western parish of Westmoreland in Jamaica.

In this video they share how they have been able to cope with their disability.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPKmCb6NoBg>

**"Only Two Eyes"**



Mr. O'Brian "Spriggy" Norton got what he calls the shock of his life only a few years ago when he was diagnosed with Glaucoma. Today his passion is that of telling others about the danger of Glaucoma.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CNBb9\\_BZ5w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CNBb9_BZ5w)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vufv-rQsPdM>

*Collin Mullings, 59, was diagnosed with Glaucoma following cataract surgery at the Mandeville Regional Hospital in Jamaica*



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McfOu9Q4XM>

*87 year old Sylvia King, used to declare that no man would ever touch her eyes. After being diagnosed with Glaucoma , she encourages every one to get their eyes checked before its too late.*

# Glaucoma myths & facts .....



**Dr Marlene Smith -Day**  
**Consultant Ophthalmologist**  
**Mandeville Regional Hospital,**  
**Jamaica**

...

suffering from **Glaucoma** which is called Juvenile **Glaucoma**. People who inherit **Glaucoma** generally develop it in their early forties. Incidences of **Glaucoma** increases further with advancing age.

**MYTH:** I have great vision, I don't wear glasses, so I couldn't have **Glaucoma**.

**FACT:** Most forms of **Glaucoma** have no symptoms or cause no change in vision until late in the course of the disease.

## SEE YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY IF .....

- You suffer from recurring blurry vision
- You believe your peripheral (side) vision is decreasing
- You see rainbow-hued halos around lights at night
- You experience pain around the eyes after watching tv or leaving a dark room.

**MYTH:** Smoking Marijuana will cure **Glaucoma**

**FACT:** Smoking "ganja" will not help those who do not use the prescribed eye drops. They will still go blind. Other problems could develop such as stomach ulcers and lung cancer.

**MYTH:** If there's no pain, there's no problem.

**FACT:** The most common form of **Glaucoma** - Open Angle **Glaucoma** initially has no symptoms. The pressure in the eye builds gradually. Without treatment, blindness will occur.

**MYTH:** Only the elderly get **Glaucoma**

**FACT:** **Glaucoma** can affect any age group from the new-born to the elderly, though increase in life expectancy is one of the high-risk factors..

It is not uncommon to find children between the ages of four and ten



Dr Smith-Day examines a patient

**MYTH :** If you have lost your vision due to **Glaucoma** , there's no need for medication.

**FACT:** You must continue to use the prescribed medication. This will control the pressure within the eye and prevent further damage .

**MYTH:** **Glaucoma** always leads to blindness

**FACT:** Nearly 90 per cent of all **Glaucoma**-related blindness can be prevented with proper treatment. The key is timely diagnosis.



Patients at the Eye Clinic located at the Mandeville Regional Hospital - Jamaica

# What is Glaucoma



Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that gradually steal sight without warning. In the early stages of the disease, there may be no symptoms. Experts estimate that half of the people affected by Glaucoma may not know they have it.

Vision loss is caused by damage to the optic nerve. This nerve acts like an electric cable with over a million

wires. It is responsible for carrying images from the eye to the brain.

There is no cure for Glaucoma—yet. However, medication or surgery can slow or prevent further vision loss. The appropriate treatment depends upon the type of Glaucoma among other factors. Early detection is vital to stopping the progress of the disease.

It was once thought that high pressure within the eye, also known as intraocular pressure or IOP, is the main cause of this optic nerve damage. Although IOP is clearly a risk factor, it is believed that even people with “normal” levels of pressure can experience vision loss from Glaucoma.

*(The Glaucoma Research Foundation)*

## Main causes of Blindness in the Caribbean

1. Un- Operated Cataracts
2. Uncorrected Refractive Errors and Low Vision
3. Diabetic Retinopathy
4. Glaucoma
5. Childhood Blindness

## OUR MISSION, OUR PURPOSE, OUR GOAL....

Our purpose is preventing blindness and visual impairment while restoring sight and creating opportunities for persons whose sight cannot be restored.

## How can you help?

Please donate to CCB Eye Care Caribbean.

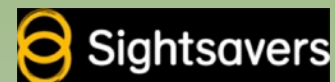
Donations may be made via our website [www.eyecarecaribbean.com](http://www.eyecarecaribbean.com)

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