

Eye disease a less-known result of diabetes; Clemson Eye supports the Walk to Stop Diabetes

GREENVILLE, SC (Sept. 11, 2014) – Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in South Carolina and the state has the sixth highest rate of diabetes among adults. Although awareness of diabetes has increased, the impact on visual health is less well known.

As part of its commitment to public education, Clemson Eye is pleased to be a sponsor of this year's Step Out: Walk to Stop Diabetes event held by the American Diabetes Association to raise awareness of the impact diabetes has on vision, and encourage early diagnosis and treatment.

Diabetes is a factor in a number of serious eye conditions. According to the American Diabetes Association, if you have diabetes, you are:

- 40 percent more likely to have glaucoma. Glaucoma is caused by pressure building up in the eye. Because it has no symptoms, glaucoma often is not identified until it is advanced and the vision loss is irreparable.
- 60 percent more likely to have cataracts. Cataract treatment for non-diabetics is a very safe and common procedure. However, for diabetics with retinal disorders, cataract surgery can be more complex.
- At extremely high risk of developing a series of related conditions under an umbrella called Diabetic Retinopathy. These conditions are caused by high sugar or glucose levels damaging blood vessels in the eye and potentially spurring the formation of microaneurysms.

Ophthalmologist Dr. Donald Glaser of Clemson Eye says diabetes "is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adult patients. Eye diseases and conditions related to diabetes can be treated and damage prevented," he says, "but early diagnosis and treatment are crucial."

"As the prevalence of diabetes grows," says Dr. Glaser, "it is more important than ever for us to educate the public on the importance of regular eye exams, as well as nutrition and lifestyle factors." Almost 40 percent of diabetics in South Carolina do not get an annual eye exam, according to the CDC. This is particularly important in the Upstate, Dr. Glaser says, where the diabetes rate across four counties is 11.6 percent, compared with the U.S. average of 9.3 percent. "We have more people at risk here," he says.

Stop by the Clemson Eye booth at the Walk to Stop Diabetes on Sept. 20, starting at 9 a.m., at Hubble Lighting on the CU-ICAR campus in Greenville to learn more.

Additional availability: To set up an interview with Dr. Glaser, please contact Laura Haight at 864-322-3179.

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Clemson Eye has been a leading provider of visual health for Upstate residents for the past 40 years, providing them with comprehensive ophthalmologic and Lasik services. Clemson Eye has five convenient locations in Greenville, Anderson, Easley, Clemson, and a Lasik center, Spectrum Lasik, in Greenville. Its American Board Certified Ophthalmologists have performed more than 50,000 cataract, Lasik and microsurgical procedures.

