

European Forum  
Against Blindness



E F A B



**The European Forum  
Against Blindness**  
Rue Montoyer 51, box 7  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

## **Over 123 million lost workdays per year caused by blindness or eye diseases according to new pan-European health economic study**

*Eleven country EU study shows that proactive intervention to prevent and treat eye disease would lead to a healthier and more productive population*

*An improved quality of life can be gained by investing in screening programmes, earlier diagnoses and adequate treatment of retinal conditions*

*Cost-effective interventions offset economic costs, estimated to be over 32 billion Euro*

**Brussels, 9 October, 2014** – Today on World Sight Day, the European Forum Against Blindness (EFAB) revealed the results of an eleven-country study (an extension to the data reported last year covering six countries) which reports on the economic impact of blindness and four leading eye sight conditions, and which concluded that blindness and vision loss lead to a reduced quality of life and increased economic burden to society.

“The key consideration and the direct call to action from this report is that investing in earlier and more targeted interventions – for example screening for diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma followed by treatment, anti-VEGF treatment as standard of care for wet AMD – would lead to a healthier population and help alleviate the cost of blindness,” said Professor Ian Banks, Chairman of European Men’s Health Forum (EMHF) and EFAB.

The topline results from the study, conducted by the independent health economics group, Deloitte Access Economics, can be accessed via the interactive analytical tool for blindness and vision impairment, which is available on [www.efabeu.org/analytics](http://www.efabeu.org/analytics)

The study, covering Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK, reports that in these eleven countries:

- 862,067 people are blind
- Many people suffer from debilitating sight loss resulting from
  - Cataracts – 29,184,875
  - Diabetic retinopathy – 3,637,458
  - Glaucoma – 4,466,224
  - Wet age-related macular degeneration (wet AMD) 2,013,228.

Blindness and the four eye diseases lead to a significant reduction in wellbeing; equivalent to 123 million workdays lost per year. Blindness and the eye diseases are estimated to result in annual economic costs of approximately 8 and 24 billion Euro respectively, across the countries studied.

The study concludes that each cost-effective intervention can off-set economic costs in the range of 2 to 3 billion Euro. These interventions include anti-VEGF treatment as standard of care for wet AMD, appropriate early detection, prevention and treatment options such as screening for cataracts, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma followed by treatment.

“In the EU-11 the four eye diseases affect approximately 1 in 10 people, and these conditions don’t only impact those directly affected, but their carers, family members and friends,” said Professor Banks. “Then there is the considerable economic burden of blindness and vision loss to society to consider. For blindness, over 50% of this cost is from informal care.”

EFAB and its partners, the European Coalition for Vision and Second Sight Medical Products, hosted an event at the European Parliament, in Brussels, to share the results of this survey with MEPs and leading professionals across the field of vision health, in order to draw attention to the importance of vision health and educate about eye diseases. A key part of their mission is to raise awareness for the fact that 50% of European blindness is preventable, and that new technologies, such as bionic eyes, can help in diseases like retinitis pigmentosa, which are yet neither preventable nor treatable.

### **The economic cost and burden of eye disease and preventable blindness study**

EFAB worked with Deloitte Access Economics to analyze the economic impact and burden of four eye diseases and blindness in eleven European countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK) and the cost-effectiveness of interventions to prevent these eye diseases. A targeted literature search for each country to identify studies reporting the prevalence of each eye disease and blindness was conducted. The burden of disease analysis included both “direct costs”, which are all healthcare costs as a result of treatment (including costs of hospitalization, general practice services, and medications), and “indirect costs” which are all costs related to loss of productivity and informal care costs. For the cost-effectiveness analysis the WHO ‘Choosing Interventions that are Cost-Effective’ (CHOICE) methods were used to establish whether interventions are worth their investment.

### **European Forum Against Blindness (EFAB)**

EFAB is an independent, multi-stakeholder advocacy platform. It currently represents four partner organizations, including the AMD Alliance International (AMDAl), the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO), the European Men’s Health Forum (EHMF) and the International Diabetes Federation European Region (IDF-Europe). The group aims to act as a platform to bring together key third parties (patient groups, healthcare professionals, policymakers and advocacy groups) across Europe, to jointly and collectively increase awareness of and attention to the importance of vision health and retina diseases in particular, and ultimately prevent vision loss through more timely diagnosis and intervention.

EFAB is supported by Novartis and Alcon as a service to medicine and patients.

For more information, please visit [www.efabeu.org](http://www.efabeu.org)

### **European Coalition for Vision**

The European Coalition for Vision (ECV) is an alliance of professional bodies, patient groups, European NGOs, disabled people's organisations, trade associations representing suppliers and research groups. We exist to raise the profile of eye health and vision, help prevent avoidable visual impairment and secure an equal and inclusive society for those with irreversible blindness or low vision in Europe. To learn more about the ECV, please visit the website [www.ecvision.eu](http://www.ecvision.eu)

### **Second Sight Medical Products**

Second Sight Medical Products, Inc., located in Los Angeles, California, was founded in 1998 with the mission to develop, manufacture, and market implantable prosthetic devices that can restore sight to the blind. Through dedication and innovation, Second Sight's mission is to develop, manufacture and market implantable visual prosthetics to enable blind individuals to achieve greater independence. US Headquarters are in Sylmar, California and European Headquarters are in Lausanne, Switzerland. For more information, visit <http://www.secondsight.com>

### **World Sight Day**

World Sight Day is an annual day of awareness to focus global attention on blindness, visual impairment and rehabilitation of the visually impaired, and is held on the second Thursday in October. It was first celebrated in 1998 and subsequently integrated into the joint WHO-IAPB VISION 2020 initiative. Typical activities include taking part in awareness-raising walks or distributing and displaying posters, bookmarks, booklets and other forms of information to raise awareness about preventable blindness. This year World Sight Day is on 9 October.

### **Media relations**

The European Forum Against Blindness  
Rue Montoyer 51, box 7  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

Jetinder Dedyal  
Hill + Knowlton Strategies  
+44 207 413 3733  
[Jetinder.Dedyal@hkstrategies.com](mailto:Jetinder.Dedyal@hkstrategies.com)