

European Forum
Against Blindness



E F A B



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

New Pan-European health economic study shows that eye diseases alone lead to a total cost to society of 20 billion Euro

Blindness leads to a significant economic burden on society, estimated to result in economic costs of over 7 billion Euro

Investing in screening programs, earlier diagnoses and adequate treatment of retinal conditions can help reduce the economic burden and lead to an improved quality of life

European health economic blindness prevention study shows that interventions to prevent and treat eye disease will lead to a healthier and more productive population

Brussels, 1 October, 2013 – The European Forum Against Blindness (EFAB) today revealed the results of a six-country study which analyzed the economic impact of blindness and four leading eye sight conditions. EFAB assessed the burden of these on health systems and societies across Europe. The study found that interventions for these conditions could offset total economic costs of 20 billion Euro across the region. Such interventions include appropriate early detection, prevention and treatment options such as screening for cataracts, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma followed by treatment, and anti-VEGF treatment for wet AMD.

“EFAB wants to draw attention to the importance of vision health and eye diseases, and ultimately prevent vision loss through more timely diagnosis and intervention,” said Professor Ian Banks, EMHF and EFAB Chair. “The results of this study show the substantial threat to people’s quality of life, and draw out the enormous economic burden imposed on societies across Europe. Through the inclusion of screening, earlier diagnosis and adequate care and appropriate and active treatment, we can already reduce the burden and minimize the risk for patients.”

The study, conducted by the independent health economics group, Deloitte Access Economics, looked at France, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and the UK and showed that blindness is estimated to result in annual economic costs of over 7 billion Euro across the countries studied, with the majority of these costs estimated to be due to informal care, provision of day-to-day care for blind people by relatives and friends, which impacts the whole society.

EFAB, today, hosted a debate at the European Parliament, in Brussels, with MEPs and leading professionals across the field of vision health as part of its activities for World Sight Day 2013, to raise awareness about preventable blindness across Europe, and to discuss how important the

results of this study are and how they can help support efforts to make blindness a public health priority.

Blindness was defined according to the WHO definition (in all countries except France and Germany) or the end stage of sight loss, which allowed for accurate cross country comparisons. The study reports that:

- 716,294 people are blind across the 6 countries
- Many people suffer from debilitating sight loss resulting from
 - Cataracts – 26,703,399
 - Diabetic retinopathy – 2,806,697
 - Glaucoma – 3,812,846
 - Wet AMD 1,821,456.

As the population ages the impact of vision loss will grow substantially in the future. As well as the considerable economic burden to society, blindness also imposes physical, social, financial and quality-of-life limitations on individuals, those directly affected, and their carers, family members and friends.

It can be concluded from the study that prevention of blindness and eye disease through investment in cost-effective interventions will lead to a healthier population, which could result in a more sustainable healthcare budget for governments; a healthier tax-paying workforce and lower productivity losses; reduced costs and burden to informal care givers (informal care costs); and improved wellbeing, quality of life and productivity for individuals and longer working lives. Therefore the prevention and treatment of vision loss should be a public health priority.

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 six European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Spain 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 (AMDAI), 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

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 10 October.

Media relations

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

Phoebe Blossom
Hill + Knowlton Strategies
+44 207 413 3249
Phoebe.Blossom@hkstrategies.com