



News Release ***For Immediate Distribution***

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Eye on Health: Vision Exams Can Detect Serious Health Problems

November is the time to check for tumors, diabetes, hypertension and other serious health issues through eye exams

Portland, Ore. (November 1, 2006) – The Oregon Optometric Physicians Association wants you to keep an eye on your health this fall by having a vision exam, a single activity that can detect serious medical problems such as tumors, diabetes and hypertension.

“Many people don’t realize their eyes are a window into their overall health,” said Dr. David McBride, Beaverton optometric physician. “Through a comprehensive vision exam, we can often spot signs or symptoms of a variety of potentially life-threatening health issues.”

One of Dr. McBride’s patients, 40-year-old Brett Hanft of Beaverton, was having problems with blind spots in his eyes, especially when looking to the left while driving. Dr. McBride conducted a field of vision test and immediately noticed Hanft could not see all the areas he was supposed to detect on the test. After conducting a few more tests, Dr. McBride suggested Hanft schedule an MRI through his primary care physician. It was then Hanft learned he had a tumor on his pituitary gland that had likely been growing for six years and was just now affecting his eyesight. Hanft soon underwent surgery to remove the tumor. Today, his eyesight has returned to normal and he says he is eternally grateful that Dr. McBride was so persistent in finding out the root of his vision problem.

“When caught early, many medical conditions can be well managed and patients can go on to live healthy, productive lives,” said Dr. Jim Hale, Corvallis optometric physician. “Having an annual vision exam is one way to see into the status of your health and potentially spot medical issues that should be dealt with right away.”

51-year-old Garth Mortensen of Monmouth, recently experienced blurred vision in one eye. When he came to see Dr. Jim Hale, Mortensen could barely see the big “E” on the eye chart. Further testing by Dr. Hale showed Mortensen’s vision could not be improved with new glasses, so Dr. Hale dilated Mortensen’s eyes and saw a major vein inside the eye was plugged and preventing blood from flowing out of the eye. This problem, formally called “ischemic central retinal vein occlusion,” causes bursting of vessels, blood leaks and swelling inside the retina. After making the diagnosis, Dr. Hale tested Mortensen’s blood pressure and found it to be so high that it was life threatening. He was immediately sent to the emergency room, where he was put on blood pressure medication for hypertension, the primary cause of his eye problem. Today, Mortensen has seen a retina specialist several times and has had a partial return of his vision. He is also successfully controlling his blood pressure with medications and improved nutrition. Mortensen says his eye exam ended up being a lifesaver.



November is Diabetes Awareness Month. Both Dr.'s McBride and Hale say it's a good time for people with diabetes to have their eyesight checked, or for people with a history of diabetes in their family to have an exam. "This is just one more medical issue that can be monitored through annual vision exams," adds Dr. Hale. "Your eyes can give us a glimpse into your overall medical situation and may lead to diagnoses of other problems."

About the Oregon Optometric Physicians Association

The Oregon Optometric Physicians Association is a statewide organization comprised of Doctors of Optometry, college of optometry faculty, optometric students and industry-related associates. It advocates advancing the quality, availability and accessibility of eye, vision and related health care. It also works to represent the profession of optometry, to enhance and promote the independent and ethical decision making of its members, and to assist optometric physicians in practicing the highest standards of patient care. Based in Milwaukie, Oregon, the OOPA has 395 members. For more information, visit www.oregonoptometry.org.

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