Written by National Eye Institute
Monday, 07 January 2013 08:55

As you and your loved ones watch the dawning of 2013, everyone is hopeful of what the new year will bring—reunions, graduations, marriages, and other fun family occasions. January is Glaucoma Awareness Month. Make seeing your best a part of your new beginning by doing what you can to make sure your eyes are healthy. If you are African American age 40 or older or have a family history of glaucoma, put learning more about this disease on your resolution list for the new year.

There has been a steady rise in glaucoma among the African American community. Currently, more than 520,000 African Americans have glaucoma, and the National Eye Institute (NEI) of the National Institutes of Health projects this number will rise to approximately 865,000 cases by 2030, a 66 percent increase. African Americans have the highest prevalence of glaucoma among minority groups. Last year, NEI invested $71 million on a wide range of studies to understand causes and potential areas of treatment for glaucoma.

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that can damage the optic nerve of the eye and result in vision loss and blindness. Primary open-angle glaucoma is the most common form. In this condition, fluid builds up in the front chamber of the eye, and the optic nerve is damaged by the resulting increase in eye pressure.

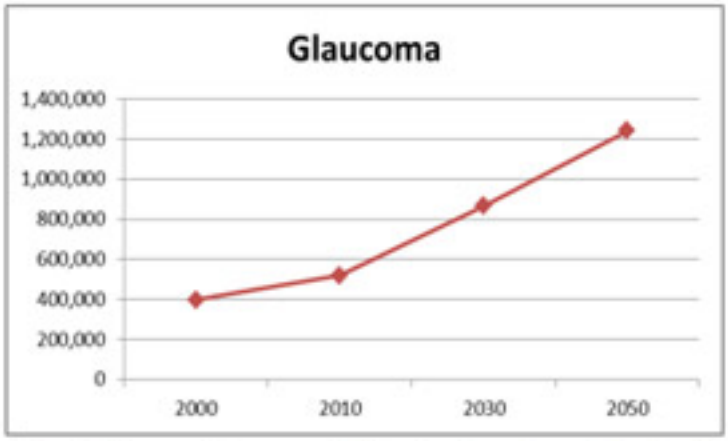

Figure 1: Glaucoma Cases among African Americans: Past and Projected, 2000 to 2050
Source: National Eye Institute, 2012

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