THE HIGH COST OF LOW VISION: The Evidence on Ageing and the Loss of Sight

Key Facts and Figures

Prevalence of Vision Loss

- **285 million** people are visually impaired worldwide.
- **94 million** older people in developing countries suffer from moderate to severe visual impairment.
- **39 million** people are totally blind worldwide.
  
  Source: World Health Organization

- Wet age-related macular degeneration (wAMD) is the leading cause of legal blindness in older people in Western societies. With proper access and awareness, much of this vision loss is preventable. *(Skaat et al., 2012)*

Costs of Vision Loss

- Compared to those without, people who experience vision deterioration are nearly three-times as likely to need skilled nursing and be admitted to long-term care facilities. *(Javitt et al., 2007)*
- Vision loss leads to decreased productivity and among the visually impaired there are high rates of absenteeism and premature retirement. *(AMD Alliance International, 2010)*
- In the region anchored by the United States and Canada, the productivity loss of absenteeism due to visual impairment in 2010 has been estimated at nearly $97 billion. *(Access Economics and AMD Alliance International, 2010)*

Cost-Effectiveness of Prevention

- **80 percent** of the causes of visual impairment globally are preventable. *(Pascolini and Mariotti, 2012)*
- Patients with vision loss have higher non-vision-related health costs, estimated to be between $2,000 and $4,500 per patient.

Health Consequences of Vision Loss

- Nearly one-third of people with vision loss suffer from clinical depression, a rate that is twice as high as the general population of adults of the same age. *(Javitt et al, 2007)*
- Injuries from falls are common with visually impaired patients, and they tend to stay in the hospital nearly 2.5 days longer than patients with normal vision. *(Morse et al., 2009)*

Global Population Ageing

- In 2012, the over-60 population numbered 810 million but is expected to grow to **2 billion** by mid-century.
- Globally, nearly **58 million people turn 60 every year**, with two people celebrating their 60th birthday every two seconds.
  
  Source: UNDESA, Population Division