

## Launch of a new alliance for the global assessment of retinopathy

**May 12** A new project has been launched to assess the awareness, treatment and implications of diabetic retinopathy globally. Results are intended to inform decision-making and policy development around this common and serious complication of diabetes.

The International Federation on Ageing (IFA), the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) working in collaboration with the New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) will gather evidence on knowledge, policies, standards of care, and supportive services for retinopathy across 40 countries.

Retinopathy is one of the most common complications associated with diabetes and one of the major causes of adult blindness. Up to 11% of adults with diabetes have Diabetic Macular Edema (DME), a specific type of diabetic retinopathy. According to the IDF Diabetes Atlas 6<sup>th</sup> edition, there are large variations in the estimates of retinopathy prevalence in people with known diabetes, with estimates ranging from 11 to 45% worldwide in people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

The global assessment of retinopathy has two substantive and connected phases:

- 1.** Phase I comprises approximately 120 interviews in eight countries representative of low, middle and high socio-economic status to better understand the level of awareness of: retinopathy as a condition and common complication of diabetes; the access, availability and pathway to retinopathy services; and the existence and content of relevant governmental policy.
- 2.** Phase II is the implementation of a survey in 40 countries, which will be formulated based on the data gathered in Phase I. The survey aims to garner statistically significant evidence intended to assist in the development of effective governmental policy.

“The impact of visual impairment goes beyond the individual; communities and economies lose earning capacity and productivity through the loss of human capital, experience and expertise. The IDF believe that increasing the evidence base around retinopathy will help relieve this burden through more effective policy and program actions,” Dr Lydia Makaroff, Epidemiology & Public Health Manager, International Diabetes Federation.

From the perspective of global ageing, Dr Barratt, Secretary General, International Federation on Ageing, said that “while improved life expectancy is a celebration in many countries, it also brings with it socio-economic consequences in relation to an increased prevalence of diabetes and its

complications, a poor level of awareness by potentially at-risk citizens, and inadequate governmental policies to meet the new demands on professional and community services”.

“Unless we act now to stem the diabetes epidemic and provide joined up services that enable people with diabetes to be checked and treated for diabetic retinopathy then the number of blind people in the world will increase dramatically in forthcoming years” said Peter Ackland, Chief Executive of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB).

The project will culminate in the production of a barometer report and a compendium of resources designed to increase awareness, as well as to inform policy and practice related to diabetic retinopathy and vision loss across countries.

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For more information contact:

Sara Webber  
International Diabetes Federation (IDF)  
[sara.webber@idf.org](mailto:sara.webber@idf.org)/+32 496 12 94 70

#### **International Federation on Ageing (IFA)**

*The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is an international, non-governmental organization and point of global connection to experts and expertise in the field of ageing. The IFA believes in generating positive change for older people through helping to shape and influence effective policy and practice that results in the improvement of quality of life. For more information about the IFA visit <http://www.ifa-fiv.org/>.*

#### **About the International Diabetes Federation (IDF)**

*The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) is an umbrella organization of over 200 national diabetes associations in over 160 countries. It represents the interests of the growing number of people with diabetes and those at risk. The Federation has been leading the global diabetes community since 1950. More info [www.idf.org](http://www.idf.org)*

### **About International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB)**

*The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) was established in 1975 as a coordinating, umbrella organisation to lead international efforts in blindness prevention activities. Its first major achievement was to promote the establishment of a WHO programme for prevention of blindness, with which it has remained strongly linked, and which is now embodied in the global initiative, VISION 2020: The Right to Sight.*