Don’t Let the “Silent Thief” of Sight Sneak up on You – Talk about Glaucoma this World Glaucoma Week and Protect Your Sight Before it’s Gone

- Glaucoma affects 67 million people worldwide¹ and 2.2 million Americans,² causing irreversible loss of vision if left untreated
- Regular Eye Exams are Essential: Patients can lose up to 40% of their vision before realizing they have glaucoma³
- Glaucoma is under-diagnosed: Early detection and proper treatment are necessary to preserve vision⁴

March 11, 2013 – Fort Worth, Texas – Approximately 67 million people around the world are living with glaucoma,¹ and unfortunately, up to half of these sufferers aren’t aware they have the disease.⁵ In other words, more than 30 million people – which is more than the population of Australia – are slowly losing their sight without notice. Currently, there are 4.5 million people around the world who are blind from the disease.⁶

Glaucoma is the second-leading cause of preventable blindness worldwide,⁷ yet it is a disease that many know little about.⁵ Alcon, the world leader in providing treatment solutions for patients living with glaucoma, is raising awareness during World Glaucoma Week about the potential danger of this disease and the critical need for everyone to schedule regular eye examinations to protect their eyesight.

World Glaucoma Week: What Can You do to Help Preserve Your Vision?
- Schedule an eye exam. Glaucoma is known as the “silent thief of sight”⁸ and is a disease without noticeable symptoms⁹ – as much as 40 percent of your vision can be lost before you even begin to notice,³ so regular check-ups with an eye care professional are critical.⁴

- Talk about glaucoma. Everyone, from babies to senior citizens, can develop glaucoma.¹⁰ Speak with parents, family, friends and colleagues about the disease and the importance of early detection.

- Make sure your loved ones are taking their glaucoma medication. With adequate treatment, most people with glaucoma will not lose their sight.¹¹ However, up to 25 percent

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of glaucoma patients do not take their prescribed medications. And, nearly 50 percent of patients stop taking their medication completely within six months of treatment, a behavior that, over time, could lead to vision loss.

More About Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that lead to progressive damage of the optic nerve. Because a healthy optic nerve is essential to the transmission of information from the eye to the brain, glaucoma can result in a gradual, irreversible loss of vision, and eventually blindness, if left untreated.

There are two main types of glaucoma: primary, or open-angle glaucoma, and acute, or angle-closure glaucoma. Open-angle glaucoma accounts for nearly 90 percent of all cases of glaucoma and is often asymptomatic, so it often remains undetected until it is at an advanced stage. Angle-closure glaucoma, on the other hand, is less common, but requires immediate medical attention. Symptoms of angle-closure glaucoma may include severe pain, nausea, redness of the eye and blurred vision.

Glaucoma Treatments and Risk Factors

Glaucoma is not curable and vision lost cannot be restored. However, remaining vision may be preserved through treatment. Glaucoma can be treated with eye drops, oral medications, laser surgery, traditional surgery, or a combination of these methods.

In addition to high IOP, certain factors can increase the risk for developing glaucoma, including:

- People with a family history of glaucoma
- Everyone over age 60
- African-Americans over age 40
- People of Asian descent (risk for angle-closure glaucoma, specifically)
- People with diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease
- People with physical eye injuries
- People who have used steroids for a long period of time.

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About World Glaucoma Week
World Glaucoma Week (WGW) is a joint global initiative of the World Glaucoma Association (WGA) and the World Glaucoma Patients Association (WGPA), to raise awareness of glaucoma, what it does to sight and how it might affect you.

About Alcon
Alcon, the global leader in eye care, provides innovative products that enhance quality of life by helping people worldwide see better. The three Alcon businesses – Surgical, Pharmaceutical and Vision Care – offer the widest spectrum of eye care products in the world. Alcon is the second-largest division of the Novartis Group, with pro-forma sales of USD 10.2 billion in 2012. Headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, USA, Alcon has more than 24,000 employees worldwide, operations in 75 countries and products available in 180 markets. For more information, visit www.alcon.com.

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