9 October 2013 – This year, World Sight Day will be celebrated on 10 October by the World Health Organization (WHO) and partner organizations around the world to focus attention on the global issue of avoidable blindness and visual impairment. The theme of this year’s campaign is “Universal eye health”, under the slogan of “Get your eyes tested”. As we age, vision in general deteriorates. As a result, eye specialists recommend regular eye checks to detect causes of blindness and visual impairment.

In 2010, WHO estimated that more than 285 million people globally were visually impaired, of whom, 39 million were blind because they were unable to access eye care and testing services. In Egypt, approximately one million people are blind and three million are visually impaired, and yet the causes of visual impairment among four out of five people are preventable. In other words, 80% of visual impairment is avoidable.

Globally, cataract and uncorrected refractive errors are the two principal causes of visual impairment, representing 75% of all visual impairment, although cost-effective interventions are available to reduce this burden. These two conditions are more frequent among older age groups.

This year marks the launch of a new WHO action plan for the prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment 2014–2019: towards universal eye health. The action plan aims to

increase access to comprehensive eye care services that are integrated into health systems. It is underpinned by five principles and approaches: universal access and equity; human rights; evidence-based practice; a life-course approach; and empowerment of people with visual impairment. The plan envisages a world in which nobody is needlessly visually impaired, where those with unavoidable vision loss can achieve their full potential and universal access to comprehensive eye care services is ensured.

The Day will be celebrated in Egypt by national stakeholders, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Population of Egypt and WHO, who are planning to conduct various activities all over Egypt. The celebration aims to increase public awareness on the magnitude of the problem of blindness and visual impairment and influence policy-makers to support and improve the national eye health programme.

World Sight Day provides a platform for organizations to encourage decision-makers, eye care professional society members, optometrists, primary health care workers, nongovernmental organizations and community members to support universal access to eye care services and implement the global action plan of avoidable blindness 2014–2019.

Related links

Regional control and prevention of blindness programme

Action plan for the prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment: 2009–2013 [pdf 1.30Mb]

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