

Early screenings key to diagnosing glaucoma

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New research is emphasizing the importance of regular screenings for glaucoma, a disease that deteriorates the optic nerve over time and is a leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide. The onset of glaucoma is associated with a delay in diagnosing the disease.

A research team based at Hotel Dieu Hospital and led by Sanjay Sharma, a professor of Ophthalmology and Epidemiology at Queen's University, examined 50 peer-reviewed articles and found support for the American Academy of Ophthalmology's guidelines regarding screening frequency.

"The real problem with [glaucoma](#) is that it begins by affecting the far periphery of vision. So most patients don't know that they have it until it progresses and begins to destroy their [central vision](#)," says Dr. Sharma. "Nearly half of glaucoma cases remain undetected and half of those individuals who are diagnosed have very advanced disease on presentation."

The frequency of screening is based on risk factors including demographic factors such as family history, ethnicity and advanced age. This study highlights the importance of regular screenings for those over the age of 40. Identifying those at risk for glaucoma could potentially lead to earlier detection and prevent the associated irreversible [vision loss](#).

"The best available data support an ophthalmologist's examination as the most accurate way to detect glaucoma," says Dr. Sharma. "This is why it is so important that family doctors refer their patients over the age of 40

for screening."

The research was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Provided by Queen's University

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