

# Comparing glaucoma tests

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Researchers are about to recruit almost 1,000 patients onto a study to establish which is the most effective diagnostic test for glaucoma.

It is estimated that around 4,000 people are registered blind or partially sighted in the UK each year because of the [eye disorder](#).

Diagnosing [glaucoma](#) can be difficult but new diagnostic tests are available and easy to perform.

However there is a need for robust evidence to guide how best to use these tests which could be potentially very useful, particularly as eye clinicians are already dealing with high numbers of patients.

University of Aberdeen researchers have been commissioned by the

National Institute for Health Research Health Technology Assessment programme to compare three new diagnostic technologies - Heidelberg retina tomograph, scanning laser polarimetry and optical coherence tomography.

Augusto Azuara-Blanco, Professor and Honorary Consultant Ophthalmologist at the University's Health Services Research Unit, is leading the research.

He said: "If one or more of the tests prove to be sufficiently accurate and easy to perform, people would not need to attend lengthy examinations in the hospital eye department in order to establish whether or not they have glaucoma.

"This would give ophthalmologists more time and resources to treat patients who do have eye diseases.

"The majority of people who are referred to hospital by their optometrist do not have glaucoma, however they must be checked out because glaucoma can cause blindness and must be treated early.

"Clinicians in Scotland see 400,000 patients with eye problems a year and glaucoma is a big part of that.

"In the UK the NHS deals with more than one million visits by patients with glaucoma in a year so we are trying to deal with a very large flow of patients."

The study will involve patients who have been referred by their optometrists with suspected glaucoma or who may be at risk of developing the disease.

The centres involved in the study are Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, St

Paul's Eye Unit in Liverpool, Moorfields Hospital in London and Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust in Cambridgeshire and patient recruitment will begin in March.

The tests are based on imaging the posterior part (fundus) of the [eye](#) where glaucoma damage can be observed. The team will evaluate the performance of these new tests by identifying those who are most likely to have glaucoma and require treatment.

Provided by University of Aberdeen

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