

# Researchers collaborate to reduce effects of the aging eye

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Aging gracefully may not be an option for the 40 million people worldwide who are blind or have significant visual impairment. It's reported that 65% of those with visual impairment and 82% of those who are blind are over 50 years of age. In a special issue of *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science (IOVS)*, ophthalmic leaders from around the world address "the aging eye" to focus attention on unmet needs and accelerate the translation of research findings into effective clinical care.

"With an aging [world population](#) and startling increases in the prevalence of diseases such as diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration, we feel that this issue is both important and timely, with chapters highlighting problems in and possible solutions to age-related diseases that affect all the major tissues of the eye," said Gerald Chader, PhD, FARVO, chief scientific officer at the Doheny Eye Institute at the University of Southern California and medical director of the Ocular Research Symposia Foundation (ORSF).

Based on an ORSF-sponsored workshop held June 14 – 16, 2013, the *IOVS* issue features new research on the genetics, biology, biochemistry, neurochemistry and the impact of nutrition and the environment on function in the older eye. Articles specifically address the economics of vision loss and the prevention and treatment of individual eye conditions. These include cataract, estimated to affect almost 22 million above the age of 40, and age-related [macular degeneration](#), deemed the leading cause of blindness in people age 60 and older in the U.S.

According to the report, by 2015, over 10 million Americans will be blind or have significant [visual impairment](#)—with a staggering impact on the cost of healthcare for both individuals and society. Direct medical costs of retinal disorders in 2013 were approximately 8.7 billion; for treatable disorders such as cataract and refractive errors, the annual costs in the U.S. are 10.7 and \$16.1 billion, respectively.

Chader stresses the special issue will help identify "low-hanging fruit" research opportunities and spur funding at basic research and clinical levels, ultimately resulting in sight-saving and sight-restoration measure. "ORSF hopes to illuminate the way to the best, practicable and most cost-efficient means of combating blinding [eye](#) diseases," he says.

Provided by Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology

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