



For Immediate Release

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National Coalition Launches new scEYEnce Campaign

*—Effort points to the vital importance of vision research,
how it is improving sight and broader health and well-being—*

New York (Sept. 9) – A national coalition of 10 leading organizations today announced **scEYEnce**, a new media campaign that shines a spotlight on the powerful benefits of vision research.

The multi-faceted campaign will raise needed awareness about the critical role sight plays in our health and well-being. The campaign will use traditional and social media outreach to highlight cutting edge research and the scientists conducting it, graphics that illustrate the impact of vision loss, and a resource-rich [website](#) to make it easy to find the stories and sources needed to effectively communicate about vision research.

Vision Research Yields Impressive Results

Approximately 12 million adults currently have significant vision loss or difficulty seeing that can't be corrected by contacts or glasses, including 1 million who are legally blind. Vision disability ranks among the top 10 disabilities among people 18 and older, and [one national survey](#) noted that people fear vision loss as much or more than losing hearing, memory, speech or a limb.

"Vision research is confronting these challenges head on," said Brian F. Hofland, PhD, President of Research to Prevent Blindness, a scEYEnce coalition member. "Scientists are producing new insights about eye disease, developing innovations to restore sight, and driving clinical breakthroughs that are helping all of us see the future more clearly."

Groundbreaking science has already produced a stem cell-based therapy in clinical testing for age-related macular degeneration, synthetic lenses that improve the sight of people with cataracts, medications that reduce the pressure within the eye to treat glaucoma, and novel therapies on the horizon for relieving dry eye.

Eye and vision research also provides valuable insights about our overall health, particularly the brain and its vulnerability to neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease.

Vision for the Future: Challenges and Opportunities

Vision research will become increasingly important in the future. "As more Americans live longer," said Jason Menzo, Chief Operating Officer at Foundation Fighting Blindness, a scEYEnce coalition member, "more of us are struggling with age-related vision decline." By 2050, the number of people in the U.S. with legal blindness is expected to double to roughly 2 million and those with other visual impairment to

double to nearly 7 million. Notably, age is associated with higher rates of common eye diseases such as cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration, and retinopathy.

Innovations generated by eye and vision science are transforming the sight of millions of Americans and reducing the \$170 billion annual impact of major vision problems. “These innovations are allowing millions of blind or visually impaired people to continue to work, contribute to their communities, and live better, fuller lives,” said Iris M. Rush, CAE, Executive Director at the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology, a scEYEnce coalition member. “Vision research is an investment in a better future for people of all ages.”

Changing How We Look on Social Media

To mark the launch, the scEYEnce campaign this week is encouraging individuals and organizations concerned about vision, vision loss and vision research to change their Twitter or Facebook profile pictures using images like this one that reflect how people with glaucoma, a common eye disease, see the world:



Other photos, with a similar image filtered to mimic the effects of cataracts, macular degeneration, or diabetic retinopathy are available at: scEYEnce.org/filters. These images were developed in collaboration with the National Eye Institute (NEI) and its [“See What I See” app](#), which uses virtual reality technology to provide users with an immersive experience of living with these major eye diseases.

“Millions of people suffer with vision loss,” said Maria Zacharias, Director of Communications at NEI, a scEYEnce coalition member. “But it is hard for people to understand this experience. The See What I See app is a powerful tool that helps us explore, in a very concrete way, how one’s life can be affected by a variety of vision challenges.”

Vision Resources, Delivered Digitally

During the next month, scEYEnce will send a set of bi-weekly emails that point to advances in vision research, highlight leading science and scientists, and encourage all of us to pay closer attention to how sight is connected not only to what we see, but to how we think, feel and live.

A campaign website at scEYEnce.org provides a rich source of information and resources—including the latest data and infographics, national reports, links to key scientists and their cutting edge work, compelling stories about new and existing research, and more—all designed to help media, policymakers and interested members of the public communicate effectively about vision research.

Contact Us

- For more information about the scEYence campaign, please contact [Christine Gherst](#) at SCP, the campaign's media partner
- For more information about the Vision Research Working Group (see below), please contact [Diana Friedman](#) at Research to Prevent Blindness
- Follow the campaign on Twitter: [@scEYenceNow](#)

About the scEYence Campaign

The scEYence campaign seeks to educate the public, the media, policymakers, and other key stakeholders about the vital importance of vision research. The campaign is supported by a working group comprised of 10 organizations dedicated to advancing vision science:

- [Alliance for Eye and Vision Research](#) emphasizes that National Eye Institute-funded research to save/restore vision has served to reduce healthcare costs, increase productivity, maintain independence, and improve the quality of life for all Americans.
- [American Academy of Ophthalmology](#) seeks to protect sight and empower lives by serving as an advocate for patients and the public, leading ophthalmic education, and advancing the profession of ophthalmology.
- [American Macular Degeneration Foundation](#) is a patient-centered foundation that supports potentially game-changing age-related macular degeneration (AMD) research, education and advocacy in order to improve quality of life and treatment outcomes for all those affected by AMD.
- [Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology](#) (ARVO) is the largest eye and vision research organization in the world. Members include nearly 12,000 eye and vision researchers from more than 75 countries. ARVO advances research worldwide into understanding the visual system and preventing, treating and curing its disorders.
- [EyeSight Foundation of Alabama](#) serves as a catalyst to improve eyesight through education, research, and access to care. Its vision is to make a difference in the eyes of the world.
- [Foundation Fighting Blindness](#) is the world's leading private funder of retinal disease research. Its mission is to drive the research that will provide preventions, treatments, and cures for people affected by retinitis pigmentosa, age-related macular degeneration, Usher syndrome, and the entire spectrum of retinal degenerative diseases.
- [Glaucoma Research Foundation \(GRF\)](#) is a national non-profit organization dedicated to finding a cure for glaucoma. For more than 40 years, GRF has worked to advance sight-saving research and provide essential educational resources for patients.
- [International Retinal Research Foundation](#) provides financial support for vision research to scientists in every corner of the globe, while focusing on discovery of causes, preventions, and cures of macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy.
- [National Eye Institute](#) (NEI), part of the National Institutes of Health, leads the federal government's research on the visual system and eye diseases. NEI supports basic and clinical science programs to develop sight-saving treatments and address special needs of people with vision loss.
- [Research to Prevent Blindness](#) is the leading nonprofit organization supporting eye research directed at the prevention, treatment, or eradication of all diseases that damage and destroy sight.

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Source: <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/visual-impairment-blindness-cases-us-expected-double-2050#:~:text=With%20the%20youngest%20of%20the,Eye%20Institute%2C%20part%20of%20the>