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Eye Health Awareness Ranks Alarmingly Low Among Culturally Diverse Groups in the United States Despite High Risk for Vision Conditions Research Shows African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans are more Likely to Develop Certain Vision Conditions, Yet May Not Be Getting the Eye Care They Need

PINELLAS PARK, Fla., Aug. 28, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- With culturally diverse populations continuing to grow in the United States, many of which are at increased risk for developing certain vision conditions as compared to the general population, Transitions Optical reveals additional evidence that African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans are not taking the proper steps to care for their eyes.

According to a recent report by Prevent Blindness America, there has been an increase over the past decade in cases of visual impairment or blindness in American adults, including an 89 percent increase in vision conditions related to diabetes. This increase is the result of a national diabetic epidemic in general; however, it is also likely connected to the increase of culturally diverse populations in the United States, who are at higher risk for the disease.

Despite a higher risk for health and vision issues, a research study supported by Transitions Optical suggests that culturally diverse groups have lower awareness of the need for preventative care. Surprisingly, two out of three Americans do not know that their ethnicity is a risk factor for developing eye health issues.

Hispanic Americans is the largest group within the various growing cultures in the United States and according to this study, only 41 percent of Hispanics visited their eye doctor within the past year. What's more, only 34 percent of Hispanic parents have taken their children to get a comprehensive eye exam. In addition, Hispanics are more likely to develop UV-related eye diseases including cataract and diabetic retinopathy; yet, merely 3.7 percent recognize that exposure to the sun can damage their eyes.

The second largest ethnic group within the United States - African Americans - is 1.5 times more at risk for developing cataract compared to the general population, and is five times more likely to develop related blindness. They are also twice as likely to be diagnosed with diabetes and more likely to have hypertension(1), both of which can cause long-term vision issues. Despite these risks, only 37 percent of African Americans report having received a comprehensive eye exam within the past year, and they are also the most likely to do nothing to protect their eyes from the sun.

Asian Americans, the fastest growing population group in the United States, present several obstacles to receiving appropriate eye care. Asian Americans are more likely than the general population to develop type 2 diabetes - which often goes undiagnosed, as Asian Americans are often less likely to be overweight, and can lead to serious vision problems(2). Although early signs of diabetes can be detected in the eye, Asian Americans are still the most likely ethnic group to skip their routine eye exams. Asians are also more likely to develop glaucoma as compared to the general population, and tuberculosis is 13 times more common in this population (according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). Both diseases can cause vision loss or blindness.

"At Transitions Optical, we are continuously working to educate consumers of all ethnicities and backgrounds about the importance of taking care of their eyes," said Manuel Solis, multicultural marketing manager, Transitions Optical. "Through these findings, we realize that there is an even greater need to encourage people to schedule regular, comprehensive eye exams and wear proper UV-blocking eyewear all year-round."

Because eye damage is cumulative, it is never too early or too late to start getting regular, comprehensive eye exams. To learn more about how to maintain eye health, the risks of developing vision conditions among culturally diverse groups and how to protect your vision, visit www.healthysightforlifefund.com. To find an eye doctor near you, visit www.transitions.com.

About Transitions Optical, Inc.

Transitions Optical is a joint venture of PPG Industries, Inc. and Essilor International. The first to successfully commercialize a plastic photochromic lens in 1990, today the company is a

leading provider of photochromics to optical manufacturers worldwide. Transitions Optical offers the most advanced photochromic technology in the widest selection of lens designs, materials and brand names.

Transitions(®) lenses are the ideal everyday choice for healthy sight. They are clear indoors and at night. Outdoors, they automatically darken as light conditions change. Transitions lenses provide visual comfort, and enhance visual quality by reducing glare and enhancing contrast, helping you to see better today. Transitions lenses block 100 percent of harmful UVA and UVB rays - helping to protect the health and wellness of your eyes - so you can see better tomorrow as well.

For more information about the company and Transitions lenses, visit Transitions.com or contact Transitions Optical Customer Service at (800) 848-1506 (United States) or (877) 254-2590 (Canada).