

Congress Recognizes 2010–2020 as “The Decade of Vision”

In 2009, the NEI celebrated its 40th anniversary as the National Institute of Health’s (NIH) lead institute that manages and funds the nation’s research commitment to save and restore vision. Congress recognized NEI’s anniversary by passing H. Res. 366 and S. Res. 209, which also designated 2010–2020 as “The Decade of Vision” and acknowledged AEVR’s sustained activities through its *Decade of Vision 2010–2020 Initiative* to educate about the power of federally funded vision research to benefit patients. This decade especially reflects the growing public health problem of vision loss:

- The leading causes of vision impairment and blindness in the United States are primarily age-related eye diseases, including age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and cataract. The number of Americans with vision loss and blindness is expected to reach nearly 7.2 million by 2030, compared to 4.2 million in 2010.
- Vision loss can be a co-morbid condition of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, which is at epidemic levels due to the increased incidence of obesity.
- African Americans and Hispanics, which increasingly account for a larger share of the population, experience a disproportionately greater prevalence of eye disease.



About This Report: Message from AEVR’s President



AEVR President Peter McDonnell, M.D.
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AEVR is pleased to release this report in conjunction with its 20th anniversary celebration. Founded in 1993 as a 501(c)3 educational foundation, AEVR serves as the privately funded “Friends of the NEI” with the mission of educating policymakers, the media, and the public about the value of federally funded vision research. Within this report, you will read about the challenges NEI faces due to the growing public health problem of vision loss and the breakthrough research it is funding to save sight and restore vision.

Our nation’s investment in vision health is an investment in overall health. Vision research is a cost-effective investment, since it leads to therapies that can delay or avoid vision loss and the associated healthcare expenditures. It also can increase productivity, preserve independence, and improve the quality of life for all Americans, especially since vision loss is associated with increased depression and accelerated mortality.

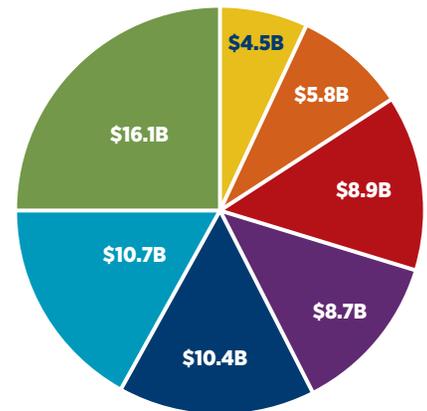
Medical Costs by Eye Disorder

Total Cost of Eye Disorders: **\$139 Billion (B)**

- Direct costs are \$68.8 B or 48% of total, reflecting medical costs and assistance programs.
- Indirect costs are \$72.2 B or 52% of total, reflecting productivity losses, long-term and informal care, and costs of transfer and entitlement programs.

The cost of treating blindness and low vision in the U.S. is \$6,680 per-person, per-year.

- REFRACTIVE ERROR
- CATARACT
- VISION PROBLEMS
- RETINAL DISORDERS
- PHYSICAL DISORDERS
- GLAUCOMA
- OTHER DISORDERS



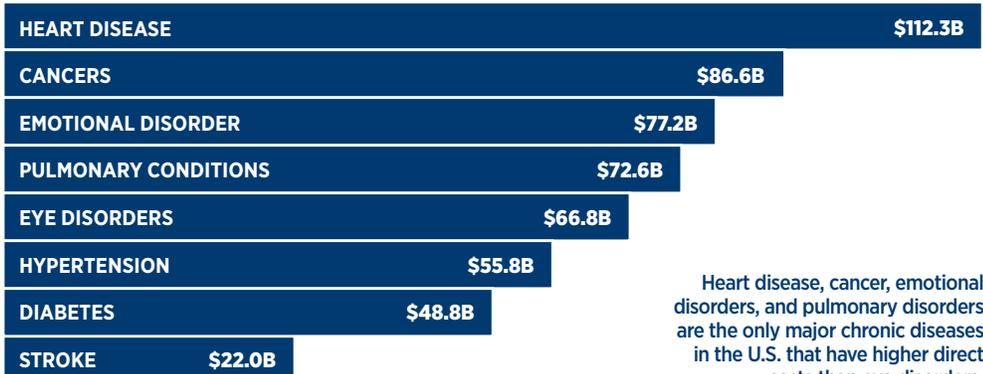
Blindness/Vision Impairment Prevalence

Prevalence: Cases by vision problem, age ≥ 40 (in Millions, M)

Blindness	1.3 M
Vision Impairment	2.9 M
Refractive Error	
Myopia (near-sighted)	34.1 M
Hyperopia (far-sighted)	14.2 M
Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD)*	2.1 M
Cataract	24.4 M
Diabetic Retinopathy	7.7 M
Glaucoma	2.7 M

*AMD age 50 and older. Another 8 M at substantial risk of vision loss

Direct Medical Costs Of Major Chronic Conditions



Heart disease, cancer, emotional disorders, and pulmonary disorders are the only major chronic diseases in the U.S. that have higher direct costs than eye disorders.

Cost Source: *Cost of Vision Problems: The Economic Burden of Vision Loss and Eye Disorders in the U.S.*, 2013, Prevent Blindness America. Cost based on 2011 U.S. population (all ages) and in 2013 dollars. “Physical disorders” include conjunctivitis, disorders of the eyelids and lacrimal system, disorders to the globe, injuries and burns to the eye, and strabismus.

Prevalence Source: *Vision Problems in the U.S.*, 2012, Prevent Blindness America and National Eye Institute. Prevalence based on 2010 U.S. Census data, in which 142.6 M Americans were ≥ age 40.