

New Study Finds High Prevalence of Diabetic Retinopathy Among Diabetic Adults

(08/11/2010) A new study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta entitled "Prevalence of Diabetic Retinopathy in the United States, 2005-2008" and published in the Journal of the American Medical Association has shown that nearly 30 percent of U.S. diabetics over the age of 40 may have diabetic retinopathy (DR), a diabetes-related eye disorder. Four percent of this population is affected severely enough to put their vision at risk. Ezra Pharmaceutical is developing a new treatment for DR.

DR, which damages the retina, is the leading cause of new cases of legal blindness among U.S. adults between 20 and 74 years old, costing the U.S. approximately \$500 million every year. Of the patients examined in the study, 29 percent manifested DR and 4 percent had developed vision-threatening cases of the disorder.

To determine whether DR was on the rise, or whether screening and treatment kept it under control, the researchers identified about 1,000 older adults with diabetes who had undergone diagnostic eye imaging as part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), and compared results collected during 1988-1994 with newer data from the same study collected during 2005-2008. The results showed a 40% increase in the incidence of diabetic retinopathy, with more than double the number of vision-threatening cases.

The researchers also found that men had a significantly higher risk of developing diabetic retinopathy compared to women, and that the risk increased the longer patients suffered from diabetes. Other risk factors included high systolic blood pressure, and high levels of a protein called hemoglobin A1c used to measure blood sugar. Mexican Americans and non-Hispanic blacks also had significantly higher rates of the condition compared to non-Hispanic whites.

SOURCE: Xinzhi Zhang; Jinan B. Saaddine; Chiu-Fang Chou *et al.*

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