

World Glaucoma Week and the technology helping to prevent blindness

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New high-tech contact lens marks a major breakthrough in the fight against glaucoma

World-leading technology will help to prevent blindness for thousands of patients by providing earlier detection and more effective treatment

The London Eye Hospital (<http://www.londoneyehospital.com/>), the UK's leading centre for premium lens implants, is offering a new single-use contact lens that is able to detect glaucoma, the leading cause of preventable blindness in the UK. By monitoring pressure within the eye over a 24-hour period, the new electronic contact lens, called Triggerfish, will make it much easier to diagnose glaucoma earlier and treat it more effectively, and thus has the potential to save the sight of thousands of patients.

Raised eye pressure (known as intraocular pressure or IOP) is a leading risk factor for glaucoma, but with current screening techniques, a single reading is typically taken at one particular moment, normally during an optician's check-up. IOP fluctuates throughout the day, however, and so this pressure could be high at certain times without the patient knowing.

By comparison, the Triggerfish lens contains a microprocessor that is able to monitor fluctuations of IOP continuously over a 24-hour period – even during sleep. As such, patients wearing the Triggerfish lens can carry on with their everyday lives as normal, and then simply return to see their doctor the next day. At that stage, the lens is removed and the data is downloaded onto a computer for immediate analysis.

“The Triggerfish sensor represents an extraordinary development in the fight against glaucoma,” says Bobby Qureshi, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon and Medical Director at the London Eye Hospital, and the only surgeon offering Triggerfish in the UK. “Not only will the Triggerfish lens make it easier to diagnose glaucoma much earlier, but it can also be used to evaluate patients already diagnosed with glaucoma to monitor how well controlled the condition is and how effectively they are being treated. As a result, Triggerfish could help to save the sight of thousands of people in the UK.”

Because the Triggerfish sensor can be used to produce a detailed graph showing how the patient's IOP has been fluctuating over a 24-hour period, it can supply doctors with the data that they need to diagnose whether the patient has glaucoma with much greater accuracy and earlier. As a result, any necessary treatment can begin sooner.

The term glaucoma actually covers a wide spectrum of conditions, all of which result in damage to the optic nerve and the retina, affecting vision and eventually, if left untreated, leading to blindness. More than 500,000 people suffer from glaucoma in England and Wales alone, with more than 70 million people affected across the world. However, it is estimated that around 95 per cent of those diagnosed in the UK will retain useful sight for life if they are diagnosed early enough, according to the NHS.

“It’s hard to put into words just how exciting this technology will be for anyone who is worried about glaucoma,” Mr Qureshi adds. “Glaucoma is a very dangerous disease, and close blood relatives of patients with Primary Open Angle Glaucoma have an increased risk compared with those without a family history of glaucoma. However, in just 24 hours, the Triggerfish sensor can provide many of these people – and thousands more – with the vital information they need to protect their precious eyesight.”

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World Glaucoma Week which will run from 11th - 17th March, aims to educate people about how to assess their risk for glaucoma and to be aware of the importance of regular eye exams and disease detection.

About the London Eye Hospital

The London Eye Hospital brings together leading Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeons to create a centre of excellence for the diagnosis and treatment of all eye conditions to the highest standard. The London Eye Hospital is registered with the Care Quality Commission and is one of the most advanced surgical eye facilities in the world. All London Eye Hospital surgeons hold or have held NHS Consultant posts and are acclaimed experts in their specialist area with an international reputation. They are also registered with all the well-known medical insurance companies such as AXA, Bupa, Norwich Union, Standard Life and others. The London Eye Hospital is committed to providing the highest level of eyecare without compromise. Patients will have the opportunity to discuss all treatment options including the latest technology and surgical techniques that are currently not available on the NHS, many of which have been pioneered by London Eye Hospital surgeons.

For more information please visit <http://www.londoneyehospital.com>

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