WORTH
A THOUSAND WORDS:
PRESERVE YOUR VISION
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INTRODUCTION

For many of us, life experiences are imprinted in our minds as visual memories. But have you ever stopped to think about how Canadians who are blind or partially sighted ‘see’ their memories? If you couldn’t rely on photographs to enhance your remembrances, how would you see the world? What would your point of view be?

This memory album was developed by CNIB to give Canadians an idea of what the world may look like to people with wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and diabetic macular edema (DME), two common eye diseases in Canada.

The photographs in this album depict scenes from the lives of everyday Canadians over the past several decades. However, the images have been digitally altered to look as they may appear to people whose vision is affected by wet AMD and DME. This provides the viewers with the chance to appreciate how someone who is living with these conditions might see the world – a chance to see things from another point of view.

The goal of this project is to educate Canadians about serious eye diseases and conditions and their impact on those affected. It is also important for Canadians to realize that the earlier an eye disease is detected, the greater the chance of preventing or minimizing associated vision loss.¹

Above all, this memory album is intended to provide Canadians with the opportunity to see things from a different point of view and demonstrate the importance of being proactive about your vision health.

FOREWORD FROM CNIB

Every 12 minutes, someone in Canada begins to lose their vision.1 But behind that impersonal statistic lie very personal stories, each in their own way exemplifying how vision loss changes lives forever, right down to the little things we often take for granted – things like reading, traveling independently, and seeing the faces of our family and friends.

Most major eye diseases are age-related, and because our population is aging, more Canadians than ever are at risk of losing their vision. But did you know that 75 per cent of vision loss can be prevented or treated if detected early?ii

That’s why it’s important to increase awareness about conditions like age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and diabetic macular edema (DME). Each of these conditions has risk factors that can be addressed to reduce the likelihood of developing them.

AMD is a progressive condition that attacks central vision and is the leading cause of severe vision loss in people over 60 years of age in Canada.1i Approximately 1.4 million Canadians have some form of AMD (wet or dry),1v many of whom may no longer be able to read, drive, or see the faces of their family members. The personal, societal and economic costs of AMD can be devastating. Unfortunately, more than 75 per cent of Canadians aren’t familiar with AMD at all, so may not be taking steps to reduce their risk.1v

DME affects people with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes, and can cause significant vision loss. The best method of prevention is to keep your diabetes in check by ensuring blood sugar levels are under control, by staying active, eating a healthy diet and taking your medicines as directed.vi

CNIB is excited to be collaborating on this innovative campaign to raise awareness among Canadians about eye diseases and their impact, so they can do more to protect the health of their eyes.

One in seven Canadians will develop a serious eye disease in their lifetimevii – affecting the way they see and experience key milestones throughout their lives. Make sure you have all the facts to know if you are at risk. Visit us online at cnib.ca for more information.

Keith Gordon, Ph.D.,
Vice President, Research, CNIB

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1 CNIB, Seeing Beyond Vision Loss, at: http://www.cnib.ca/en/your-eyes/Pages/default.aspx
5 CNIB, Fact Sheet, Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) at: http://www.cnib.ca/en/williams-eye-care/Documents/AMD_Fact_Sheet.doc
THOSE LONG AND LAZY DAYS OF SUMMER HOLIDAYS

“When the boys were young they could spend hours in the water at the beach on summer holidays, sometimes even without being in constant motion! The days never seemed to end.”
SHOULDN’T SHE BE THE ONE SITTING ON THE KNEE?

“There’s nothing like sea air and time to relax to rekindle a romance, but fortunately our love never seems to flicker out. We enjoy being with each other wherever we are!”
LOTS TO BE THANKFUL FOR

“Traditions are what make holidays special, and nothing says Thanksgiving more than a turkey dinner with all the trimmings. What makes it really special, though, is who’s around the table.”
TAKE ME TO GRANDMA!

“It’s not that Grandpa has bad shoulder-carrying technique, but sometimes the warm embrace of Grandma’s arms is just too tempting to resist!”
WHY DO THE KIDS ALWAYS SEEM TO WIN?

“We grew up with the saying that it’s not whether you win or lose that counts, it’s how you play the game. The best part of a game with grandchildren is, quite simply, the playing!”
“Rock n’ roll and modern dancing has its merits, but for the full experience of great music and great dancing, for my money there’s nothing like the swing dances of our youth! We went all out – and all night!”
"What more could we have wanted in life than to be new parents with a new house in a new suburb, and our own car in the driveway? Those were the days - the future seemed endless!"
A PROUD MOMENT FOR ME, AND MY FAMILY

“My university graduation was a very special moment. I was so proud as the first woman in my family to graduate from university! I was kind of sad to say farewell to a place I really enjoyed, but couldn’t wait to head out into the ‘real’ world.”
“Weddings are such emotional moments as two lives and two families are brought together and no one has any idea what the future will hold. All we know for sure is that lives will be changed forever.”
SHINNY TIME OR PARTY TIME?

“We told our parents we were just going out to play some shinny on the frozen lake with friends, but it was much more than that – it was a major social event!”
WHEN THE SUN WENT DOWN, THE ACTION REALLY STARTED!

“The drive-in theatre was a big part of my youth – and my education about both the big wide world portrayed in the movies and about the opposite sex!”
FOR KING AND COUNTRY

“I’m proud of my family’s contribution to defending our freedoms and always thankful for their sacrifices for our benefit. They really did ‘Pay it forward’ – with their lives.”
WET AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION (AMD)

WET AMD

• Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of severe vision loss for Canadians over the age of 60. There are two types, wet and dry. While only 10-15% of AMD cases are of wet AMD, wet AMD is responsible for 90% of the severe vision loss caused by AMD.

• Wet AMD is considered advanced AMD and is preceded by dry AMD.

• Wet AMD occurs when abnormal, fragile blood vessels growing under the macula - the central part of the retina - leak fluid or blood which, when it accumulates in the macula, leads to swelling and the development of scar tissue on the retina, resulting in blurred, distorted and loss of central vision.

• AMD often progresses slowly, but dry AMD can change to wet AMD at any time, then causing often rapid deterioration of vision in one or both eyes.

• The loss of central vision and blurring or distortion of vision can severely compromise a person’s ability to perform everyday activities like seeing faces, reading and driving.

SYMPTOMS

• There are few symptoms of dry AMD in early stages; as it advances vision could become blurred or not as bright, requiring more light to see things. As it progresses, there could be a dark spot in central vision that can get bigger.

• With wet AMD, straight lines may appear wavy and a blind spot can develop, resulting in the loss of central vision.

• Treatment options are available that, particularly if the condition is discovered early, can prevent or slow down the progression of vision loss and in some cases improve vision.

PREVALENCE

• It is estimated that 1.4 million Canadians have some stage of AMD.

• A 2011 study estimated that nearly 90,000 Canadians had vision loss from AMD in 2007.

• It is anticipated that the number of people with AMD will double within the next 25 years due to the ageing of the population.

RISK FACTORS

• The exact cause of wet AMD is not known but, as the name suggests, risk increases with age, with almost all severe cases in people over age 60. Other known risk factors include smoking (doubling the risk), race (Caucasians are far more likely to get AMD than those of African descent) and a family history of AMD. An unhealthy lifestyle (diet and exercise), high blood pressure and abnormal cholesterol levels can also be risk factors.
DIABETIC MACULAR EDEMA (DME)

DIABETIC MACULAR EDEMA

• Diabetic macular edema (DME) is a common complication of diabetic retinopathy. It is caused by damage to the blood vessels of the retina and is a leading cause of vision loss in the working-age population in the developed world.ii

• When the blood vessels in the retina swell and leak, the leaking fluid can cause swelling in the macula, the central part of the retina at the back of the eye where sharp vision is determined.iii

• Macular edema – swelling of the macula – can then result in blurred vision and can lead to permanent vision loss over time.iv

• While it can occur at any stage of retinopathy, macular edema is more likely to occur as the disease progresses.v

SYMPTOMS

• The first symptoms of DME are usually blurry vision and/or “floaters,” spots in the line of vision.vi

• Sometimes vision will clear without treatment and then reoccur. Treatment should be sought at the first sign of vision difficulties.vii

• Visual impairment due to DME compromises patients’ ability to perform activities such as working, reading and driving and can lead to blindness.viii

• Treatment options are available that, particularly if the condition is discovered early, can prevent or slow down the progression of vision loss and in some cases improve vision.

PREVALENCE

• It is estimated that vision impairment resulting from DME affects approximately 2.5% of the nearly 2.4 million Canadians with diabetes, or approximately 60,000 Canadians, making it a major cause of adult-onset vision loss.ix

RISK FACTORS

• People with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes are at risk of developing diabetic retinopathy.x Obesity and smoking are important risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes.xi

• While everyone with diabetes is at risk of developing DME, progression of diabetic retinopathy can be assisted by controlling blood sugar (glucose) levels, blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels.xii

• To protect against vision loss, everyone with diabetes should get a dilated eye exam once a year.xiii

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ii Ciulla TA et al, Diabetic Retinopathy and Diabetic Macular Edema: Pathophysiology, screening and novel therapies, Diabetes Care 2003:26:2653–2664


iv Ibid.

v Ibid.


vii Ibid.

viii Ibid.

ix Prevalence rate of vision loss from DME among diabetics (2.56%) from Petrella, RJ et al, Prevalence, demographics and treatment characteristics of visual impairment due to diabetic macular edema in a representative Canadian cohort, J Ophthalmology, 2012: Article ID 159167, 6 pages, applied to number of Canadian diabetics (2.4 million) from Public Health Agency of Canada, Diabetes in Canada: Facts and figures from a public health perspective, Ottawa, 2011, p.4.


xi Ibid.


xiii Ibid.
CNIB: OUR SERVICES

CNIB is a registered charity, passionately providing community-based support, knowledge and a national voice to ensure Canadians who are blind or partially sighted have the confidence, skills and opportunities to fully participate in life.

To do that, our dedicated specialists work with people of all ages in their homes, communities or local CNIB offices - providing emotional support and personalized rehabilitation services in everyday skills. Our staff help clients access counseling services, recreation programs, and connect with others who understand the impact of vision loss on everyday life.

Through our independent living services, our specialists work with Canadians who are blind or partially sighted one-on-one or in a group setting, helping them build the skills to live independently. They will help develop techniques for identifying money, using the phone, pouring a cup of coffee, labelling medications and organizing household items. They will also teach important travel techniques to regain independence, like the sighted guide technique, how to walk with a white cane and how to ride public transit with confidence.

For our working-age clients, our career and employment services can provide the information and resources needed to build job skills and achieve a satisfying career. For families, CNIB is there at every stage as an essential resource. Our child and family services offer children support like braille preparation, tactile learning sessions and peer programs. We provide parents with a variety of resources including educational materials, peer groups, and workshops on raising a child who is blind or partially sighted.

Through Shop CNIB we also offer access to a range of innovative consumer products and technology that can make life with vision loss easier The CNIB Library, houses Canada's largest collection of materials in alternative formats like braille and audio. Users can download books and daily newspapers at the click of a button through our digital collection, or enjoy classic movies with our narrated video collection.

In addition to our community-based services, we also work hand-in-hand with Canadians who are blind or partially sighted to advocate for a barrier-free society, and we strive to eliminate avoidable sight loss with world-class research and by promoting the importance of vision health through public education.

Since our founding in 1918, CNIB has grown to become the primary resource for Canadians who are blind or partially sighted, with offices in communities across the country. We’re proud to help thousands of Canadians see beyond vision loss every single day.