



## **Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists**

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**SK** DOCTORS OF OPTOMETRY

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## **Diabetes Management**

As primary eye care providers, Optometrists are ideally suited to play a pivotal role in early diagnosis and prevention of ocular conditions and diseases that can threaten sight. Optometrists see patients every one to two years for routine examinations which aid in early diagnosis of many vision conditions and therefore prevents vision loss. Analysis of patient's medical, ocular, and family history allows patient counseling regarding healthy choices to maximize vision throughout their life. Through the eyes, Optometrists can detect early onset of diseases such as hypertension, cancer, and diabetes, and quickly refer patients to physicians for earlier diagnosis and treatment.

### **Reported in the “Cost of Blindness Report” Published by the CNIB in 2009:<sup>1</sup>**

- Cost of vision care in Canada is increasing steadily. Vision loss is the single most expensive morbidity at an estimated \$15.8 billion annual cost in Canada in 2007 (\$8.6 billion direct costs to the health system and \$7.2 billion in indirect costs). This is expected to rise to \$30.3 billion by 2032.
- Sixty-eight (68%) percent of Canadians with vision loss are unemployed.
- Number of Canadians developing irreversible vision loss by age 65: 1 in 9 (equal to the number of women affected by breast cancer); by age 75 the numbers increase to 1 in 4
- Approximately 2 million Canadians have diabetes.
- Approximately 7% of people in Canada have diabetes.
- It is estimated that by the year 2020 that 10% of people in Canada will be living with diabetes.

Injury associated with vision loss is a serious concern, particularly for seniors who experience double the number of falls and quadruple the number of fractured hips as their peers with normal vision. Expanded optometric care can have a major impact on the prevention of injuries, offers opportunity for greater collaboration and gives patients more options for navigating the system and directing their own health care. Patients know they can choose to be treated by a practitioner, with whom they have an established relationship, trusting that their optometrist will look out for their best interests and will collaborate widely with other professionals who support their personal health.

Optometrists can also relieve some of the pressure on family physicians, as they are better suited to diagnose patients who present with eye issues and to make efficient referrals in a timely manner for those who require secondary or surgical care. This would free up the family physician to see a greater number of general health care patients.

Diabetes is currently the leading cause of vision loss in people under 60 years of age, and the second over the age of 60.

Effective October 1, 2014 the provincial government re-insured annual eye examination coverage for all Saskatchewan residents who have been diagnosed with diabetes.

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<sup>1</sup> Cost of Blindness Report, CNIB published September 2009

[http://www.cnib.ca/eng/cnib%20document%20library/research/summaryreport\\_covl.pdf](http://www.cnib.ca/eng/cnib%20document%20library/research/summaryreport_covl.pdf)



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## **Reported in the Cost of Diabetes in Saskatchewan and Canadian Study Conducted in 2010:**

Saskatchewan faces the highest prevalence of diabetes and pre-diabetes in the Prairies

- The Canadian Diabetes Association predicts that 10% of the population will be living with diabetes by 2020.
- When we include pre-diabetes it is estimated that 25% of the population will be affected by 2020.
- Direct and indirect financial impact of diabetes in Saskatchewan per year in 2010 was \$419 million per year and estimated to increase to \$532 million per year by 2020. (Costs in 2009 dollars)
- People of Aboriginal descent are three to five times more likely than the general population to develop type 2 diabetes; and
- Almost 80% of new Canadians are from populations that have a higher risk for type 2 diabetes. These include people of Hispanic, Asian, South Asian, or African descent.

## **What are the benefits of Covered Optometric Care for Patients with Diabetes?**

### **Benefits for Patients:**

- Improved access, choice and convenience.
- Savings in time and travel costs for patients and caregivers.
- Earlier detection of disease through easier access to care and leading to better long-term health outcomes, better quality of life and greater personal productivity.

### **Benefits for the Government of Saskatchewan:**

- Reduced costs for delivery of primary eye care, particularly with diabetes.
- Fewer unnecessary referrals and less duplication of service and costs.
- Reduced surgical waiting lists by removing non-surgical management from the Ophthalmology queue.
- Reduced pressure on family physicians through more accessible referral base.
- Reduced long-term care costs associated with vision loss.
- Ultimately improved health out-comes and less strain on the health care system as a whole.

For more detailed information refer to the Cost of Diabetes in Saskatchewan Report

<http://www.diabetes.ca/documents/get-involved/saskatchewan-dcm.pdf> or An Economic Tsunami the Cost of Diabetes in Canada@ [http://www.diabetes.ca/documents/get-involved/FINAL\\_Economic\\_Report.pdf](http://www.diabetes.ca/documents/get-involved/FINAL_Economic_Report.pdf)