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Center for Vision and Population Health at Prevent Blindness Established to Implement Strategies to Address Eye Health

***-Paper Published in the Journal of the American Medical Association
Ophthalmology Addresses Need to Coordinate National Eye Health Efforts -***

CHICAGO (Dec. 6, 2018) – Healthy vision can be a key component to independence and well-being for people of all ages. However barriers such as poor access to eye care, lack of insurance coverage, and inconsistent policies for eye health can prevent early detection and treatment of eye disorders. [Prevent Blindness](#), the nation's oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, is committed to convening stakeholders in vision, public health, and patient advocacy to address the barriers to healthy vision and work to increase the uniformity of vision preservation nationally. To accomplish this, the [Center for Vision and Population Health at Prevent Blindness \(CVPH\)](#) has been established as a national coordinating body for effective practices, state-level technical assistance, and programmatic interventions.

A 2016 report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM), "[Making Eye Health a Population Health Imperative: Vision for Tomorrow](#)," advanced a number of recommendations for improving eye health in the United States. Among the ensuing discussion was the need for a coordinated national effort that engages key stakeholders to advance vision and eye health from a population health perspective.

"The NASEM Report emphasized current gaps and the pressing need for action, but executing its recommendations will require coordinated efforts from stakeholders across public health, policy, community, and clinical arenas" said Heather E. Whitson, MD, MHS, co-author of the NASEM report and Associate Professor of Medicine, Associate Professor in Ophthalmology, and Deputy Director of the Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development at Duke University. She added, "Prevent Blindness and its Center for Vision and Population Health are perfectly positioned to serve as the 'backbone' of this effort."

The CVPH will respond to this call to action and will work through diverse professional stakeholders and patient advocates to drive improvements in policy, program, and a coordinated national approach to eye health. Prevent Blindness president and CEO, Jeff Todd, along with co-authors Dr. Whitson and Edwin C. Marshall, O.D., M.S., M.P.H., Professor Emeritus of Optometry and Public Health, Indiana University, addressed the various challenges facing, and provided strategies for, such a center in a

recently published article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association Ophthalmology* entitled, "[Eye and Vision Health for Tomorrow: From Recommendations to Coordinated Action.](#)"

Working in direct collaboration with experts from medical, scientific, public health, research and corporate sectors, the CVPH will leverage key stakeholder input, data from improved surveillance efforts (including state and national survey data), and peer-reviewed scientific literature to identify areas of geographic, population, and disease significance that provide opportunities for significant impact. The information, resources, and guidance developed by this new Center will result in increased awareness about eye health and preventive practices that can be integrated into existing health and social service programs, ultimately elevating the attention given to eye health in the context of public health programs.

As part of the launch of the CVPH, Prevent Blindness is establishing an Advisory Committee, chaired by Dr. Whitson, and staffed by Kira Baldonado, Vice President of Public Health and Policy at Prevent Blindness. The Advisory Committee will include experts in the fields of ophthalmology, optometry, epidemiology, geriatrics, minority health, public health, and patient advocacy.

"The NASEM report has been monumental in elevating the need facing this country and in presenting multiple areas of improvement for our nation's vision health," said Mr. Todd. "Now is the time for all those working to address vision and eye health to coordinate and streamline our efforts to effectively improve access to quality eye care, promote research, and establish best practices to improve eye health today and for generations to come."

For more information on the Center for Vision and Population Health at Prevent Blindness, please call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020 or visit preventblindness.org.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call (800) 331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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