



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Laura Bianco

Alliance Communications

813-978-1992 ext. 227

laura@alliancecommunications.net

WRINKLES, YELLOW TEETH, BLINDNESS, OH MY

Port Richey Optometrist Gives Patients Another Reason to Kick the Smoking Habit

TAMPA, February 11, 2008— As if people need one more reason to put out their cigarettes, they can now add vision loss to the long list of risks affecting their health. Smoking is not only linked to lung cancer, wrinkled skin and bad teeth, but research now shows that it can drastically reduce and impair vision.

“Long-term smokers of one pack or more a day have more than twice the normal risk of age-related macular degeneration,” says **Nicole Linsey Parsons, O.D.**, owner of Linsey Eyecare in Port Richey. Dr. Parsons is warning smokers of the dangers of Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and vision loss as part of Prevent Blindness America’s national AMD awareness campaign in February.

AMD is a disorder in which part of the retina that captures images in the center of the visual field breaks down. AMD is the leading cause of vision loss and newly diagnosed blindness in people age 65 and older and afflicts over 8 million people in the United States.

“It can make performing daily activities like driving, reading, watching TV and recognizing people very difficult,” says Dr. Parsons. “Peripheral vision generally remains intact, and elderly people with age-related macular degeneration rarely require canes or guide dogs. However, they have been found to have lower quality-of-life overall.”

Doctors have yet to determine why AMD occurs. Previous research has implicated low concentrations of zinc, vitamin E, and beta-carotene in the blood; these antioxidants soak up harmful molecules called free radicals. Poor blood flow to the retina may also be a cause. Smoking ranks as a risk factor because it reduces absorption of these antioxidants and impairs circulation, Parson says.

Once AMD begins, the pinhead size macula develops yellow spots and lumps called drusen. Drusen accumulate because garbage disposal cells, called phagocytes, fail to clear away cellular debris. In the worst case, leaky blood vessels worm their way into the retina and flood the macula. The eye's efforts to repair itself lead to scarring, which only makes matters worse.

Doctors have not found an effective way of halting this process. Although laser surgery can seal off wayward blood vessels, it only delays the inevitable. Peripheral vision may survive, but faces blur into featureless ovals and the central words in any sentence disappear.

In such a situation, prevention becomes a person's best defense; hence the rising interest in the link between age related macular degeneration and smoking.

Saying no to cigarettes "may reduce the loss of vision and may ensure a brighter view of the world for years to come," concludes Dr. Parsons.

About Linsey Eyecare

Linsey Eyecare in Port Richey has been family owned and operated since 1986. The full-service optometric practice offers routine eye exams, contact lens fitting and emergency eye care. Owners/optometrists Dr. Nicole Linsey Parsons and Dr. Brent E. Parsons provide preventative visual health screening, including cataract inspection, testing for glaucoma, visual acuity, and near vision. Linsey Eyecare has one of the largest showrooms in the area for frames and has an onsite lab. For more information on Linsey Eyecare call (727) 844-3400 or visit www.LinseyEyecare.com.