Regular eye checkup essential for all patients with diabetes

New Delhi, Feb 9, 2017: Diabetic retinopathy is the major cause of blindness in patients with diabetes mellitus. But, in most cases it is a preventable cause of blindness. Poor glycemic control, high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels increase the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy.

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes recommend optimal glycemic control including blood pressure and serum lipid control to reduce the risk or slow the progression of diabetic retinopathy.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr R N Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement stated that, “In most patients, diabetic retinopathy to begin with is usually asymptomatic or may cause only very mild symptoms. Hence, many people with diabetes remain unaware until the disease is at a very advanced stage, when it is too late for treatment. Vision that has been lost cannot be restored. Hence, regular screening of patients with diabetes to detect retinopathy and early intervention is very important to prevent visual impairment and blindness. Patients with type 1 diabetes should have an initial dilated and comprehensive eye examination within 5 years after the diagnosis of diabetes.”

“Most people with diabetic retinopathy do not have any symptoms or visual loss due to their retinopathy. However, without treatment, diabetic retinopathy can gradually become worse and lead to visual loss or even total loss of vision. The longer you have had diabetes, the higher your risk of developing retinopathy. It is uncommon if you have had diabetes for less than five years. However, around 9 in 10 people who have had diabetes for longer than 30 years can be affected. Studies have also shown that those people with poor control of their diabetes are more likely to develop all complications, including retinopathy”, added Dr. K.K Aggarwal.

Following tips may help prevent and manage Diabetic retinopathy:

✓ A yearly dilation is mandatory for those with controlled diabetes, but those with diabetic retinopathy may require more frequent examinations.
✓ Monitor your blood sugar regularly, follow a healthy diet and exercise schedule and comply with your diabetes medication.
✓ Stick to a well-balanced, nutrient-rich diet to protect eye health. Leafy greens and foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids are beneficial for eye health.
✓ Smoking can speed-up the development of diabetic retinopathy and make it more difficult to control blood sugar. Quit smoking.
✓ Wear sunglasses with 100 percent UV protection when outdoors.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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