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Retina South Africa Calls for Urgent Action to Prevent Diabetes-Related Vision Loss During Diabetes Awareness Month

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As South Africa marks Diabetes Awareness Month and commemorates World Diabetes Day, Retina South Africa welcomes the recently adopted Johannesburg Declaration for Accelerated Action on Diabetes in South Africa, which calls for stronger leadership, improved access to care, increased accountability, and urgent action to address South Africa's growing diabetes crisis. The Declaration highlights diabetes as a major public health challenge and calls for accelerated, coordinated action to reduce preventable harm and improve health outcomes for all South Africans.

Retina South Africa was proud to partner with Diabetic Alliance for today's World Diabetes Awareness Day commemoration at Constitutional Hill, Johannesburg. ” We support this national call to action and emphasises that the impact of diabetes extends far beyond blood sugar management. Poorly managed diabetes can cause serious eye complications, including diabetic retinopathy, a condition that damages the blood vessels in the retina and remains one of the leading causes of preventable blindness among working-age adults worldwide”, said Manny Moodley CEO of Retina South Africa.

"Vision loss caused by diabetes is often preventable through early diagnosis, effective disease management, and regular eye examinations," said Retina South Africa CEO Mr Manny Moodley. "Every person living with diabetes should understand the importance of protecting their sight. By the time noticeable symptoms appear, irreversible damage may already have occurred."

The Johannesburg Declaration envisions a future where all South Africans have equitable access to prevention, treatment, screening, and care, regardless of income, location, disability, or background. Retina South Africa believes that eye health must form an integral part of this response and that retinal screening should be recognised as a critical component of diabetes care.

Recent reports continue to highlight challenges facing people living with diabetes, including gaps in diagnosis, treatment, healthcare access, and ongoing monitoring. These barriers place many South Africans at increased risk of preventable complications, including vision impairment and blindness.
During Diabetes Awareness Month, Retina South Africa encourages:

- People living with diabetes to schedule regular comprehensive eye examinations, even when vision appears normal.
- Healthcare providers to prioritise early detection and referral for diabetic eye disease.
- Policymakers to ensure that eye health and retinal screening are incorporated into national diabetes strategies.
- Communities and families to support individuals living with diabetes through awareness, education, and access to healthcare services.

The organisation further calls for greater collaboration between diabetes advocacy groups, healthcare professionals, government departments, and organisations representing persons with disabilities to ensure that preventable vision loss receives the attention it deserves.

"Behind every statistic is a person, a family, and a future that can be protected," Retina South Africa added. "We commend the Diabetes Alliance and all stakeholders involved in advancing the Johannesburg Declaration. Together, we can reduce the burden of diabetes, prevent avoidable blindness, and ensure that every South African has the opportunity to live a healthy, independent life."

As South Africa moves from declaration to action, Retina South Africa remains committed to raising awareness about retinal diseases, advocating for accessible healthcare, and empowering people to take proactive steps to protect their vision.

About Retina South Africa

Retina South Africa is a national patient-led advocacy organisation dedicated to supporting individuals living with retinal and vision-related conditions through advocacy, education, awareness, and empowerment. The organisation works to promote access, inclusion, and improved quality of life for people affected by vision loss across South Africa.

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