



HEALTH EQUITY NOW

The American Diabetes Association® and Genentech Partner to Increase Equitable Access to Eye Health Care

Project Aims to Remove Barriers to Care to Help Prevent Vision Loss

ARLINGTON, Va. (March 20, 2023) – Today, the American Diabetes Association® (ADA) and Genentech, a member of the Roche Group, announced a new partnership as part of the ADA’s Health Equity Now work to tackle access to screening and treatment for eye diseases that affect the diabetes community.

Diabetes is the leading cause of vision loss in people 18–64 years old, and African Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Hispanics/Latinos, and older adults living with diabetes are at higher risk of losing their vision or going blind.¹ Comprehensive eye exams play a crucial role in the prevention, early detection, and intervention of eye disease and vision loss caused by diabetes, yet many in these communities either don’t receive or don’t have appropriate access to eye health care.

“For people living with diabetes, a regular eye exam is a must to prevent or delay vision loss caused by diabetes,” said Charles “Chuck” Henderson, chief executive officer of the ADA. “Sadly, health inequities have led to many people not receiving the eye care and treatment they need. Through this community-based program made possible by Genentech, we will identify the barriers to eye health, address those barriers, and support community awareness through screenings and education.”

The programming will kick off with a pilot in Birmingham, Alabama in collaboration with community partners and African Americans to understand the barriers to eye health in under-resourced communities and provide resources, including education and screenings, to address these barriers. Learnings from this pilot will inform future collaborative work between the ADA and Genentech to improve health equity in eye care for people living with diabetes.

“Health disparities are a deep-rooted and systemic challenge,” said Alexander Hardy, chief executive officer of Genentech. “Genentech is proud to support the ADA’s Health Equity Now program as an important step forward in driving better eye care for all patients. This builds on our commitment to address inequities by advancing inclusive research in ophthalmology, expanding diversity in the field, and improving equitable access to care.”

This partnership brings together the ADA’s and Genentech’s shared dedication to health equity and long-standing commitment to people living with diabetes-related eye disease. A pioneer in the field, Genentech continues to research and develop treatments for conditions such as diabetic macular edema (DME) and diabetic retinopathy (DR), which can cause visual impairment and blindness if left untreated. In 2022, Genentech launched ELEVATUM, a first of its kind study with one of its medicines in underrepresented patients with DME.



American Diabetes Association® and Genentech's Health Equity Now® Partnership

Community Engagement and Impact

ADA's **Health Equity Now®** health education program, in which Genentech is one of the key Anchor Partners, brings together organizations focused on increasing awareness about diabetes and eye health and addressing health disparities and inequities in communities with the highest disease burden.

Through this partnership, ADA and Genentech aim to remove barriers, reach people, and drive change in communities and health systems, working to address eye disease and diabetes awareness through a health equity lens.

Despite advances in the science and innovation of new medicines, some patients still need help accessing care and treatment. Our organizations are committed to making healthcare equitable for all. We envision a world where all individuals can experience their full potential for health and wellness, and a future of science that is more diverse, inclusive, and equitable. Year one of this opportunity will focus on the African American community.

The program has three main pillars:



1
Identify barriers to eye screening, referrals and treatment among underserved patients



2
Initiate activities to reduce barriers to diabetes eye care



3
Support awareness through community outreach and education with local organizations

- Birmingham offers an opportunity to create a hub and spoke model to reach rural communities.
- An estimated **68.7%** of the Birmingham city population is classified as Black or African American⁵.
- More than **500,000** people in Alabama have diabetes. **35,000** adults in Alabama are diagnosed with diabetes every year⁶.
- Alabama is located in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention **diabetes belt**⁷.
- Birmingham had an estimated adult diabetes prevalence of **17.3%** in 2019¹. This was a full eight percentage points higher than the national estimated adult diabetes prevalence that year of **9.3%**².
- Life expectancy for the City of Birmingham was estimated at **74.8** years for the 2010-2015 period¹. This is nearly four years less than the national estimate of **78.7** years during that same time frame³.
- An estimated **32.6%** of Birmingham Zip Code area residents live below **200%** of the federal poverty level. This is nearly **3%** higher than the national average of **29.8%**⁴.
- An estimated **26.4%** of Birmingham Zip Code area residents have no broadband internet subscription. This is nearly **10%** higher than the national average of **14.8%**⁴.

- Racial and ethnic minorities are **two to three times** more likely to develop significant visual complications such as DME than White patients⁹ and Black men are **twice as likely** to die from diabetes compared to their white counterparts⁸.
- African Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Hispanics/Latinos, and older adults living with diabetes are **at higher risk** of losing their vision or going blind. By the time many of these patients are seen by a retina specialist, their condition has progressed to a more advanced stage⁹.
- African Americans were **less likely** than non-Hispanic whites to receive any eye care examinations².
- Black and Hispanic patients with DR are **more likely** to present at advanced stages of the DR with a poorer prognosis⁹.
- The lack of screening examinations for Black and Latino people includes a lack of understanding of DR and the importance and accessibility to treatment; including patient, physician, and institutional barriers⁹.
- A study of eye screening between 2002 to 2009 showed that the screening rate for whites increased from 56 to 59%, while the screening rate in minorities decreased from 56 to 49%¹⁰.
- DR is the leading cause of blindness in American adults¹².
- Less than half of all U.S. adults adhere to guideline-recommended eye screenings. Patients with DR rarely have symptoms early in the disease⁹.
- Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness among adults aged 18–64 years².
- Among US adults aged 18 years or older with diagnosed diabetes, crude data for 2022 indicated:
 - 11.8% (95% CI, 11.1%–12.4%) reported severe vision difficulty or blindness².
- A recent study, conducted at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, found that eye disease affects almost one-third of adults over age 40 years with diabetes, and more than one-third of African-Americans and Mexican Americans. The more severe, vision-threatening form of the disease was more than twice as common in Mexican Americans, and almost three times as common in African-Americans, than in the white population¹¹.



To get involved and learn more about eye health, visit diabetes.org/healthequitynow/genentech.

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