



Australian Society of Ophthalmologists

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Society of Ophthalmologists Incorporated ABN 29 454 001 424

Eye safety threatened

7 February 2014

Australians are being warned by eye surgeons to take special care in protecting their eyesight.

“Our capacity to see is one of our greatest gifts and should never be taken lightly,” says Dr Arthur Karagiannis.

As President of the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists, he said two recent incidents had caused concern, particularly in respect of glaucoma, often known as the "Sneak Thief of Sight" that affects over 300,000 Australians.

The first concerned the Optometry Board of Australia extending the scope of practice for therapeutically-qualified optometrists to diagnose and treat glaucoma without ophthalmic oversight.

Dr Arthur Karagiannis said glaucoma is the leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide and must be diagnosed and treatment overseen by a medically- trained ophthalmologist

“The role optometrists play in eye care is highly valued and most optometrists and ophthalmologists enjoy working in close collaboration. But we fear that patients who are not advised to seek a referral to an ophthalmologist may suffer eyesight deterioration because of an incorrect diagnosis.

“We view this situation so seriously we have taken legal action in the Supreme Court of Queensland to restrict eye disease diagnosis to medically-qualified doctors who can ensure patient safety is paramount.”

The other issue is a website offering "Bright Eyes Eye Drops for Glaucoma". The Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has imposed sanctions on ethoseyesite.com that makes false claims about the drug in breach of the Advertising code.

TGA warns people tempted to use the drops that they could harm their eyesight through faulty self-diagnosis or inappropriate treatment of potentially serious conditions.

To date the internet site has ignored the TGA 's directive and continues to market this drug on its website

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The ASO urges those concerned about their eyesight to check with an optometrist but seek a referral to an ophthalmologist if a serious diagnosis is identified.

Further information: David M. Russell, ASO Director of Policy & Research, (07) 3831 3006. Interviews with Dr Karagiannis can be arranged.

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