Sun Awareness Week 2016 Puts “Focus” on Protecting Your Eyes

-Dermatologists and Ophthalmologists partner to Help Canadians Protect their Eyes from harmful UV Rays-

Ottawa, June 10, 2016 – To coincide with Sun Awareness Week (June 6 – 12, 2016), the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) and the Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) announced today that they have formed a partnership to develop an evidence-based standard for ultraviolet rays (UV) protection of non-prescription sunglasses and to verify that glasses meet the standard on a voluntary basis. Eye medical doctors (ophthalmologists) caution that too much exposure to UV light raises the risks of eye diseases, including cataract, growths on the eye, and cancer, with nearly half of a person’s lifetime exposure to UV radiation taking place by age 18. The Eye Sun Protection Program is the first program developed by ophthalmologists and dermatologists in Canada and will offer Canadians the peace of mind of knowing that the glasses meet a standard developed by physicians.

“UV protection is not just for the skin. Just like the skin, the eyes can be damaged by the cumulative effect of years of sun exposure, which may lead to increased risk for cataracts, clouding of the lens of the eye, macular degeneration and in some cases cancer of the eye or eyelid”, says Dr. Allan Slomovic, President of the Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS). “Children and adolescents are especially vulnerable to the sun’s rays because their ocular lenses aren’t yet mature and can’t filter UV light as effectively as adults, causing damage to the retina. Just as sunscreen and clothing coverage are essential elements of a sun protection regimen, so are protective sunglasses.”

Canadians are likely familiar with small oval stickers on sunglass lenses that indicate 100 per cent UV protection. However there is currently no independent, third-party program in Canada to verify the veracity of this claim. Glasses shown to meet the Eye Sun Protection Program standard will be eligible to carry a unique logo that tells consumers that product information has been reviewed by experts and found to meet all requirements. The standard will apply to the lenses of sunglasses to ensure that they sufficiently block harmful UV rays as well as the frames, to ensure that there is sufficient coverage of the eye area. The CDA already operates a similar program for sunscreen products called the Sun Protection Program. This program recognizes sunscreen products that meet a standard that provides for effective sun protection. Product literature – such as test reports – are reviewed to ensure that requirements are met. The approved products are then licensed to display the CDA logo.

“We have been successfully operating our Sun Protection Program since 1989, and we’re very pleased to be able to contribute this expertise to a new program for sunglasses together with our COS partner,” said CDA President Dr. Vince Bertucci. “Many people are already aware of the dangers of skin cancer from UV rays, but may not be aware of the damage that these rays can cause to the eye. That is why we decided to partner with the COS to help raise awareness and educate the public on this risk, and what they can do to protect their eyes.”

The standard will be developed by a committee of knowledgeable ophthalmologists and dermatologists reviewing the latest evidence. With the standard in place, a process will be offered voluntarily to industry to submit their products for review in order to apply the program logo. The goal is to have the program ready for industry application by early 2017. Companies will pay a fee to cover the cost of the program. In the future, the program may be expanded to include prescription glasses.
Sun Awareness Week takes place annually to remind Canadians to protect themselves from harmful UV radiation.

While the number of new cases of skin cancer continues to rise, it is one type of cancer that can be prevented by taking simple precautions:

**Protect your skin**
- When the UV Index is 3 or higher, protect your skin as much as possible. In general, the UV Index in Canada can be 3 or higher from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. between April and September, even if it’s cloudy.
  - Seek shade or bring your own (e.g., an umbrella).
  - Wear clothing and a wide-brimmed hat that cover as much skin as possible, as appropriate to the activity and weather.
  - Use sunscreen labelled “broad spectrum” and “water-resistant” with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30, on skin not covered by clothing. Apply sunscreen generously and reapply when required.
- Don’t use UV tanning equipment or deliberately try to get a suntan, and avoid getting a sunburn.

**Protect your eyes**
- Wear sunglasses or prescription eyeglasses with UV-protective lenses.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat for added eye protection.

**Sun Awareness Week**

The Canadian Dermatology Association has organized the nation-wide early summer Sun Awareness Week since 1989. The aim is to educate Canadians about the dangers of too much sun and to help stop the rising incidence of skin cancer in Canada. This year’s Sun Awareness Week is Monday, June 6 to Sunday, June 12, and consists of a number of events and activities across Canada, including free skin cancer screenings, community events, and school visits by dermatologists.

**About the CDA**

The Canadian Dermatology Association, founded in 1925, represents Canadian dermatologists. The association provides easy access to the largest, most reliable source of medical knowledge on dermatology. CDA exists to advance the science and art of medicine and surgery related to the care of the skin, hair and nails; provide continuing professional development for its members; support and advance patient care; provide public education on sun protection and other aspects of skin health; and promote a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. By doing so, CDA informs and empowers both medical professionals and the Canadian public. To learn more about the work CDA does, visit [http://www.dermatology.ca](http://www.dermatology.ca) or join the conversation on [http://www.Twitter.com/CdnDermatology](http://www.Twitter.com/CdnDermatology) or [www.Facebook.com/CdnDermatology](http://www.Facebook.com/CdnDermatology).
About the COS

The Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) is the national, recognized authority on eye and vision care in Canada. As eye physicians and surgeons, we are committed to assuring the provision of optimal eye care to all Canadians by promoting excellence in ophthalmology and by providing services to support our members in practice. Our membership includes over 900 ophthalmologists and 200 ophthalmology residents. We work collaboratively with government, other national and international specialty societies, our provincial partners and affiliates and other eye care professionals and patient groups to advocate for health policy in Canada in the area of eye and vision health. COS is an accredited, award-winning provider of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) through the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) and is an affiliate of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA).

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