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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**The Florida Society of Ophthalmology**

## **ANNUAL EYEMDs CONFERENCE SPOTLIGHTS ROLE OF PHYSICIAN REFERRAL FOR LOW-VISION REHABILITATION**

### ***Masters in Ophthalmology 2018 Kicks Off This Weekend***

ORLANDO, FL (June 8, 2018)—In an attempt to better educate eye care professionals about the efficacy of low-vision rehabilitation, a panel discussion on the role of physician referral will feature prominently at the Florida Society of Ophthalmology's annual meeting, Masters in Ophthalmology 2018, to be held this weekend at the Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes.

Lighthouse Central Florida and Florida Agencies Serving the Blind worked with conference organizers from the Florida Society of Ophthalmology to facilitate a panel of experts to discuss vision-specific rehabilitation: its implications for improving quality of life and the importance of consistent physician referral. The panel will be the first at the conference to address this issue.

"Vision rehabilitation is the term that describes specialized training activities that teach individuals, who live with blindness and vision loss, how they can adapt to doing activities of daily living in an independent, self-sufficient way," said Lee Nasehi, president/CEO, Lighthouse Central Florida, a vision rehabilitation service provider affiliated with the Florida Agencies Serving the Blind.

"Since ophthalmologists are typically the first to formally diagnose eye conditions and vision loss, it only makes sense that this conversation be given a forum at the Masters in Ophthalmology annual conference and we cheer the Florida Society of Ophthalmology for facilitating it."

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, advances in technology mean that modern vision rehabilitation can help most patients with any degree of vision loss. Provision of, or referral to vision rehabilitation is now the standard of care for all who experience vision loss.

Despite this endorsement and acceptance of the practice, significant barriers to accessing low-vision care continue to exist. Low rates of referral from eye care professionals is identified as one such barrier.

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A recent study conducted by the University of Alabama at Birmingham examined the rate of referral for low-vision rehabilitation services by resident and attending ophthalmologists for adults with irreversible vision impairment. The study looked at a cross section of 143 patients with impairment in one or both eyes. According to researchers, the findings highlight a need to better educate ophthalmologists and residents in ophthalmology, about the efficacy and outcomes of referral to rehabilitation services for patients with low vision.

“Vision is universally valuable – intrinsically and instrumentally – and what we do with it determines much of our life,” said Jaime H. Membreno, MD, FSO Board member. “We are very fortunate to collaborate with low vision rehabilitation services in achieving the most benefit for our patients, a very rewarding challenge for all of us. I invite you to attend this joint initiative in current technologies facilitating access to many low vision services available.”

The panel discussion is titled Vision Rehabilitation and the Role of Physician Referral, and will be moderated by Ms. Elly DuPre, president, Florida Agencies Serving the Blind. Panelists include:

- Carol Brady-Simmons: Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS), Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Miami, FL
- Josh Espinal: Chapter President, American Federation for the Blind; Founder, Martial Science Federation, Daytona Beach, FL
- Donald C. Fletcher, MD: Low Vision Rehabilitation Specialist, Retina Consultants of Southwest Florida, Fort Myers, FL

Masters in Ophthalmology 2018 was designed to provide attendees the latest updates and advances in ophthalmology through cutting-edge educational lectures and subspecialty breakout sessions. The educational program offers an extensive review of topics that are important and relevant to both comprehensive ophthalmologists and subspecialists. In addition to vision rehabilitation, this year’s meeting will cover lectures on cataract and anterior segment surgery, cornea/external disease/refractive surgery, glaucoma, pediatric/strabismus, retina-vitreous, uveitis, and more.

### **About Lighthouse Central Florida**

Since 1976, Lighthouse Central Florida has provided education, independent life skills and job training and placement to more than 100,000 people with sight impairment and their families. They are the only private, non-profit agency offering a comprehensive range of services to people living with sight impairment in the tri-county area. Through effective programs, proven curricula, certified instructors and years of personal and professional experience, Lighthouse ensures that individuals of all backgrounds have the tools they need to lead productive, independent lives while pursuing their dreams and goals without limitations.

### **About Florida Society of Ophthalmology**

The Florida Society of Ophthalmology (FSO) is a nonprofit medical society focused on protecting the medical specialty of ophthalmology. The FSO represents more than 500 physician members in the state and provides continuing medical education for physicians and other healthcare professionals to advance patient care in the realm of ophthalmology.