

**Dr. Rohit Varma, Founder of CHA HPMC’s Southern California Eye Institute, Publishes Editorial Revealing Gaps in U.S. Glaucoma Data for Underserved and Aging Populations**

*Findings published in prestigious JAMA Ophthalmology Magazine*

**LOS ANGELES, CA – October 21, 2024** - Dr. Rohit Varma, Executive Medical Director at the [CHA Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center](#) and Founder of its state-of-the-art Southern California Eye Institute, has published a [new editorial](#) in *JAMA Ophthalmology*, a prestigious peer-reviewed journal, that calls for greater efforts to correct the chronic underreporting of glaucoma in fast-growing minority and other underserved communities.

The editorial points out that much of what the medical profession knows about glaucoma is based on current studies of whites, blacks and Latinos in urban areas. But it has only old data about urban whites and Blacks, and no data at all on American Indians, Asian Americans, persons 75 years and older and residents of all backgrounds in rural areas, which lack quality health care.

The result, the editorial concludes, is that the medical profession has no idea of how widespread glaucoma has become even as our society continues to become older and more diverse, with nearly 20 per cent of its population currently identifying itself as mixed race.

"These giant gaps in medical data raise some very serious and troubling questions," said Varma, a national expert in glaucoma research founder of CHA Hollywood's Southern California Eye Institute. "I suspect the prevalence of glaucoma and the blindness it causes is much worse than our current estimates indicate. But there's no way of knowing for sure until we do the hard work to find out."

Glaucoma is a condition associated with pressure in the eye that damages the optic nerve and can lead to blindness if it isn't caught early and treated. Varma, who has studied glaucoma for more than 30 years, has written or co-authored 200 academic papers on the disease.

"The reason why it's important to study these communities in particular the rural is because it is a well-known fact that they live in medical deserts where they just don't have access to high-quality care," said Varma. "There's a higher chance their glaucoma won't be detected and treated in time, and that leads to a much higher burden of disease and blindness."

In the editorial, Dr. Varma calls on the medical profession to adopt a more expansive “research agenda on vision health in the US to include individuals in rural areas, older individuals, and racial and ethnic minority groups (e.g., American Indian and multiracial individuals). This is essential for achieving a better understanding of the burden of glaucoma in the increasingly diverse US population.”

Varma submitted the editorial at the invitation of editors at *JAMA Ophthalmology*.

**About CHA Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center**

[CHA Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center](#) (CHA HPMC) is a nationally recognized acute care facility that has cared for Hollywood and its surrounding communities since 1924. Today, CHA HPMC offers comprehensive health care services with a 434-bed acute care facility, including 89 skilled nursing beds. The hospital has a medical staff of more than 550 physicians and specialists, representing 69 specialties and 75 different countries. CHA HPMC embraces the area’s diverse, multicultural patient populations by providing all who walk through its doors quality care in a compassionate manner. It is a member of CHA Health Systems, a dynamic global healthcare organization that provides a full spectrum of services in seven countries around the world, including 91 hospitals and clinics, 30 research and 14 education institutions

and 31 bio/pharmaceutical/healthcare companies. For more information about CHA HPMC, visit <http://www.hollywoodpresbyterian.com>.

**About Southern California Eye Institute**

[Southern California Eye Institute](http://www.sceyes.org) is dedicated to providing the highest level of vision care, using the latest technology and treatments to deliver the best outcome to patients in Los Angeles and from around the world. The institute's expert physician-scientists are advancing innovations in stem cell and regenerative therapies, artificial intelligence and bioelectronic implants to further the prevention, early detection and treatment of eye diseases and conditions. Founded by world-renowned ophthalmologist Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, SCEI is located in Los Angeles at CHA Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center. For more information, visit [www.sceyes.org](http://www.sceyes.org).

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