GLAUCOMA: Optometry Tidbit
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Glaucoma is one of the major causes of blindness among aging adults. It is caused by a blockage in the eye’s drainage canal, the trabecular meshwork. Without drainage, excess fluid in the front of the eye builds up pressure on the eye’s sensitive blood vessels and optic nerve. Damage to the optic nerve inhibits visual information passing to the brain and over time stress to it can result in complete vision loss.

There are two major types of glaucoma. The first, open-angle glaucoma, also called chronic glaucoma, is an almost unnoticeable condition except for a loss of peripheral vision. In this case, the trabecular meshwork is gradually blocked and drainage of fluid is slow. Since symptoms are difficult to detect, it is important to take a visual field test at an annual eye exam to catch it early. Because there is no cure, treatments are mostly preventative and are most commonly eye drops that can be used in combination with laser treatments or surgery. The second major type, closed-angle or acute glaucoma, is a sudden, emergency situation. Due to external stress, the iris pushes forward and completely blocks the trabecular meshwork, allowing no eye drainage. Vision is lost quickly and the patient experiences excruciating eye pain. They must visit an ophthalmologist as soon as possible for a laser iridotomy, which punches a hole in the meshwork.

Though these are the most common types of glaucoma, there are many others not all related to pressure. Glaucoma is best described broadly as a disease of the optic nerve.
Sources:

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