

IMPACT OF DEPRESSION IN ELDERLY PATIENTS WITH LOW VISION

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To determine the effects of depression in the elder patients suffering from low vision and correlate depression with low vision.

METHOD: A cross-sectional study was performed on 91 subjects who visited Low Vision Center at Mayo Hospital Lahore. All the patients were asked to fill the questionnaire. Qualitative data was analyzed through frequency and percentage. This study was conducted from September to November 2020.

RESULTS: Forty six out of ninety one (50.5%) patients had trouble in reading regular size print. Fifty three percent were having difficulty to sign documents. Forty percent were having difficulty in recognizing faces. Sixty three (69.2%) patients had difficulty in independent travelling. Reduced vision leading to unhappy feeling sometimes was experienced by 39.6% of the participants. Out of 91, 40 patients of low vision having depression get frustrated when they could not perform certain tasks. Poor daily routine work was found in 50.5%. Patient having mild, severe and very severe glare problem were 51.7%, 24.2% and 6.6% respectively. Severe problem while watching television is found in 39.6% patients. Depressive patients having thoughts of hurting themselves were 3.3%. Thirty eight percent felt that ignorance could develop stress.

CONCLUSION: There were high chances in low vision patients to develop depression because of visual loss, functional impairment, and difficulty in daily life activities. Visual impairment restricted a person's independence, and worsened the quality of life. If a person is counseled properly, it is beneficial in increasing the functional performance and will also help him or her to avoid developing depression.

KEYWORDS: Low vision, Depression.

INTRODUCTION

Low vision patient is one who is capable of less than 6/18 vision to light perception and fields of vision restricted to less than 10 degrees. Low vision has loss of central vision, loss of visual efficiency, and loss of peripheral vision. It is an irreversible loss of vision. There is no accepted definition of low vision so it is also known as partial vision or vision impairment.^{1,2} Approximately 1 out of 28 persons over 40 years of age have low vision caused by age related diseases.³ The impairment is not corrected by glasses or contact lenses and people with low vision may have low contrast sensitivity as well as impaired visual acuity. Mostly low vision occurs in old age.⁴ Definitions of low vision

measure vision in terms of visual loss (visual acuity or visual field) or ability to perform daily routine tasks. One definition stated that people with low vision are unable to read at normal reading distance.⁵ Low vision has an intense effect on daily life as it cause anxiety and depression among people. Low vision is mainly issue for older adults. Losing ability to drive safe, read, look at mobile screens or TV can make people feel off from others. People may be unable to do their personal activities independently. The prevalence of low vision in older adults was increased by 18% in 2020.⁶

Depression is a mental disorder that often causes

feelings of sadness and loss of concentration. It can affect your well-being, thinking and behavior can lead to many sensitive and physical complications. The feeling of helplessness or not being able to do certain tasks can cause depression.⁷ Elderly people are mainly affected with depression due to different factors such as any medical illness, family issues, suffering from an existing impairment, not being able to read or write, or feeling alone.⁸ Depression is a common factor in visually impaired people and reduces level of functioning independently. In group of visually impaired people, depression remains untreated in most of the cases.⁹ When visual impairment is associated with depression, it can have an adverse impact on functioning and value of life.¹⁰ It has become a major aspect now in elder people and associated with many diseases. It can severely impact the health of people who are depressed due to their condition and symptoms. Depression is common in people with low vision and reduced level of functioning regardless of vision loss. The impact of age-related visual impairments can occur on behavioral competence, including daily activities, mobility and leisure. Deterioration of vision leads to a significant decrease in behavioral competence among the elderly. Reduced vision has been recognized as an important and unique predictor of effectiveness, but less influential than many other age-related health problems. Reduced eyesight also seems to be very damaging to vision-dependent movement and leisure.¹¹

The importance of the study is to add evidence to psychosocial effects on older adults who develop vision loss. The attitudinal traits of elderly and visual impairment have a major impact on an individual's readiness required to learn new ways to accomplish routine activities with limited vision and the kinds of assistance that elderly people with vision impairment need. Demonstrating the importance of various problems (in this study, depression) on the lives of these individuals will make it easier for caregivers to determine which services are required. This is important for professionals and organizations working with older people who have a knowledge base of issues related to elderly and visual impairment and acknowledge the psychological and common characteristics of vision loss as part of the aging process. The beneficiaries are ophthalmologists, social workers and clinics for the visually impaired.¹²

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A cross-sectional study was performed on 91 subjects who visited Low Vision Center, Eye Department, Mayo Hospital Lahore. Both genders were included with presenting age above forty years. All the patients were asked to fill the questionnaire. Qualitative data was analyzed through frequency and percentage. This study was conducted in September, October and November 2020. Patients were asked (investigated by asking questionnaire based Performa) how much problem they were facing in their daily life activities and how decreased vision impact on their mental health. The statistical test was performed by using SPSS-25.

RESULTS

The low vision patients are having many problems in their daily routine work. For example, 46/91 (50.5%) were having trouble in reading regular size printed materials. Around 52.7% patients were having problem while signing their names on document. Patients frequently having trouble in recognizing people were 39.6%. Sixty-three out of ninety-one (69.2%) patients were having difficulty in independent travelling. Reduced vision leading patients to feel unhappy sometimes was experienced by about 39.6%. Out of 91, 40 patients of low vision having depression got frustrated when they could not perform certain tasks. Poor daily routine work was found in 50.5% of patients (table 1).

Table1: Problems faced by low vision patient in daily life.

Sr. No.	Problems	No	Sometimes	Frequently	Uncertain	Total
1	Trouble in reading regular size printed materials	19(20.9%)	47(50.50%)	25(28.5%)	0	91
2	Trouble in signing on document	12(13.2%)	48(52.70%)	29(31.9%)	2(2.2%)	91
3	Problem in making phone calls	15(15.5%)	49(53.80%)	27(29.7%)	0	91
4	Trouble in recognizing people	15(15.5%)	49(53.80%)	27(29.7%)	0	91
5	Trouble in seeing time with watch	5(5.5)	45(40.95%)	38(41.8%)	1(1.1%)	91
6	Trouble in managing daily life activities	8(8.8%)	31(34.10%)	45(40.95%)	5(4.5%)	91
7	Fear while driving	12(13.19%)	57(51.87%)	22(24.18%)	0	91
8	Trouble while cooking or sewing	25(22.75%)	31(34.07%)	21(23.08%)	13(14.29%)	91
9	Problem while reading or writing	5(5.49%)	57(51.87%)	19(20.88%)	0	91
10	Feel restricted in visiting friends & family	25(22.75%)	19(20.88%)	31(34.07%)	17(18.58%)	91

Low vision patients are facing issues with their decreased vision having mild glare problem about 51.7%, 24.2% and 6.6% noted severe and very severe. Severe problem while watching television is found in 39.6% patients (table 2).

Table2: Problems faced by low vision patients with decreased vision.

Sr. No.	Problems	No	Sometimes	Frequently	Uncertain	Total
1	Glare problems	11(12.09%)	52(57.14%)	23(20.93%)	5(4.55%)	91
2	Problem while seeing steps	3(3.30%)	32(29.12%)	37(33.77%)	20(21.98%)	91

More than half of the depressive patients were having thoughts of hurting themselves - of whom 3% were having them on daily basis patients (table 3).

Table3: Impact of depression on low vision patients.

Sr. No.	Problems	No	Sometimes	Frequently	Uncertain	Total
1	Thoughts of hurting themselves	41(45.05%)	35(38.45%)	12(13.19%)	3(3.30%)	91
2	Dealing with depression	10(10.99%)	43(39.13%)	31(34.07%)	8(8.79%)	91

DISCUSSION

This research was conducted with the purpose to describe the impact of depression in elder patients with low vision. Frequency and impact of depression is assessed in elder patients attending low-vision clinic. After assessing 91 patients by following questionnaire, it is possible to identify that how visual impairment, limitation and incapacity can cause depression in patients. According to epidemiological studies, about 13% of people with poor eyesight experienced indications of major depression, which is almost three times more than that among the general population. A significant objective of these studies was evaluation of the occurrence of symptoms of primary depression. Severe symptoms were^{13,14} frequent and persistent in these patient populations. The study sample included elderly patients with poor eyesight; patients who were monitored and referred by an ophthalmologist to a clinic for assess low vision. They were asked a question related to poor eyesight or depression. The calculation is that there is a large amount of depression in patients. Depression is independent of the severity of the visual effects on disability. Recognition of depression in elder low vision patients help to recognize high-risk

individuals and hopefully progress in their attitude and functional capabilities. The outcome of these studies specifies the significance of depression in low vision patients and their necessity for assessment and management.

CONCLUSION

Proper counseling and treatment of low vision can improve quality of life of patients in numerous aspects, such as behavioral, independent living, daily routine work, and more precisely low chances of incidence of depression.

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