

Barriers to low vision services and challenges faced by the providers

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Abstract

Objective: There were two objectives of the study. First to identify the barriers as perceived by patients and providers to access the low vision services and second was to identify the challenges faced by the main providers.

Study design: Structured questionnaire based interviews of patients and providers.

Methodology: To find out the barriers to access of low vision services. The interviews based on structured questionnaire were conducted for two patient groups. The first group consisted of 97 visually impaired individuals attending the department of low vision services at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital Rawalpindi while the second group included 56 visually impaired individuals attending the four rehabilitation centers/schools for the blind in Rawalpindi/Islamabad. To identify the barriers as perceived by the main providers of low vision services and challenges faced by them the interviews based on structured questionnaire were conducted for 19 low vision service providers.

Results: From patients point of view, major barrier to low vision services identified was inability to visit hospital /rehabilitation center alone , 29.8% in hospital group and 33.9% in rehabilitation centers group while the lack of social and family support, cost of travelling, long distance, affordability, hesitation in using devices and lack of satisfaction were other important barriers identified. From providers point of view, major barrier to uptake of services was the need for repeated follow-ups. Optometrists were the main provider of low vision services contributing to 47.4% of the providers. The major challenge faced by the providers was motivation of patients to use low vision devices.

Conclusion: The major barrier to low vision services according to the patients is inability to visit the hospital alone, while according to providers, it is the need for repeated follow up which proves major barrier towards uptake of services. Motivation is the major challenge faced by providers, majority of which are optometrists. *Al-Shifa Journal of Ophthalmology 2014; 10(1): 21-28.* © Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.
