

AB034. Knowledge and understanding of eye disease among older adults with vision impairment

Caitlin Murphy^{1,2,3}, Stephanie Pietrangelo^{1,3},
Sophie Hallot^{1,3}, Jonah Toulch³, Aaron Johnson^{1,3}

¹Department of Psychology, Concordia University, Montreal, QC, Canada; ²School of Optometry, Université de Montréal, Montreal, QC, Canada; ³CRIR/Centre de réadaptation MAB-Mackay du CIUSSS du Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, Montreal, QC, Canada

Correspondence to: Aaron Johnson, PhD. Concordia University, Department of Psychology, 7141 Rue Sherbrooke Ouest, Montréal, QC H4B 1R6, Canada. Email: aaron.johnson@concordia.ca.

Background: By 2026, projections indicate that 1/5 Canadians will be over the age of 65. This shift in demographics will be accompanied by an increase in age-related eye disease. Survey studies have reported vision loss as a major medical concern among older adults, but there is little information on older adults' awareness and knowledge of age-related eye diseases. A lack of knowledge can lead to missed or delayed treatment and/or lifestyle modification. This study aims to assess the knowledge and understanding older adults have of their own eye disease and its prognosis.

Methods: Participants over the age of 50 with a visual impairment were recruited from the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre, the Low Vision Self-Help Association (LVSHA) of the West Island and through word of mouth. Visual acuity and contrast sensitivity were measured using the ETDRS charts and Mars Charts, respectively. Optical coherence tomography (OCT)/scanning laser

ophthalmoscopy was used to take cross-sectional images of participant retinas. Participants were asked to name their visual diagnoses and describe them in their own words. Participant diagnoses were compared to diagnoses determined by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

Results: To date, this study has recruited 26 participants (7M, 19F) over the age of 50 years (range, 51–95 years). Many participants (73%) were able to name their visual diagnoses, articulate their symptoms, and discuss their treatment and prognosis. The majority of these individuals (67%) were clients of the MAB-Mackay or participants in the LVSHA. Of the 27% (4M, 4F) who were unclear or had misunderstood their diagnoses, half were participants in a low vision support group, but they had multiple visual diagnoses and it was the congenital or trauma-related visual impairments acquired before joining the MAB-Mackay or LVSHA that remained unclear. The other 4 individuals who misunderstood their diagnoses were not involved with any low vision or rehabilitation organizations.

Conclusions: Visual impairment is sometimes dismissed as part of aging. A lack of awareness and knowledge can lead to missed or delayed treatment and/or lifestyle modifications. The preliminary results of this study demonstrate the important role organizations like the MAB-Mackay and LVSHA play in education and adaptation to low vision for older adults. Individuals with a better understanding of their own diagnoses are more likely to follow through with doctor-recommendations and have successful treatment or slowed progression.

Keywords: Low vision; low vision rehabilitation; aging; awareness

doi: 10.21037/aes.2019.AB034

Cite this abstract as: Murphy C, Pietrangelo S, Hallot S, Toulch J, Johnson A. Knowledge and understanding of eye disease among older adults with vision impairment. *Ann Eye Sci* 2019;4:AB034.