

Why are glaucoma patients with available vision care seeking treatment late?

Glaucoma, an eye disease damaging the optic nerve by increased ocular pressure, is the second leading cause of blindness in Ghana. ¹

8.5% of people over the age of 40 are affected by glaucoma in Ghana. ²

In a rural area of Ghana, 96.7% of patients arriving to the clinic had a moderate to advanced case of glaucoma. In an urban area, 71.7% of patients arrived with a moderate to advanced case. ²



The “invisibility” of early stage glaucoma is a significant barrier to care. This indicates a lack of value associated with receiving eye care unless a vision problem becomes apparent.

Availability of vision care and higher standard of living in the urban area are not substantially solving the problem of treating glaucoma earlier.



Success of preventive medicine hinges on the value perceived by the patient and population.

Patients need incentive to seek preventive medical care.

Preventive medicine faces structural constraints, yet requires individual responsibility.

Prevention is preferred over treatment and cure for many instances of medical care.

The value of vision care is not apparent until glaucoma is a perceived problem.

A sample of 49 glaucoma patients at Emmanuel Eye Centre was selected for IRB approved personal semi-structured interviews.

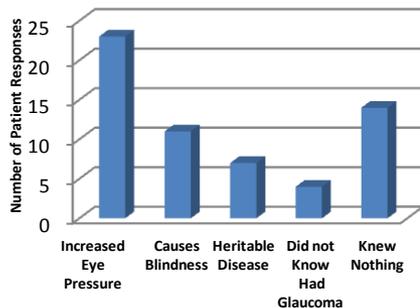


Journal entry excerpt after a patient interview:

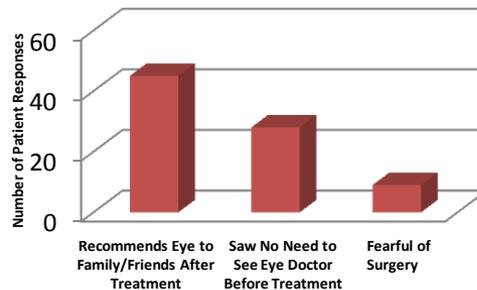
*I interviewed a reverend with glaucoma today, and he knew about the issue of seeking timely health care. He told me how Ghanaians **culturally do not seek medical care unless there is a visible problem. This can be a problem with glaucoma since there are little to no symptoms until vision is already beginning to fade.** Treatment truly needs to begin before any symptoms show. The reverend also told me how he invites people to speak about health education...*



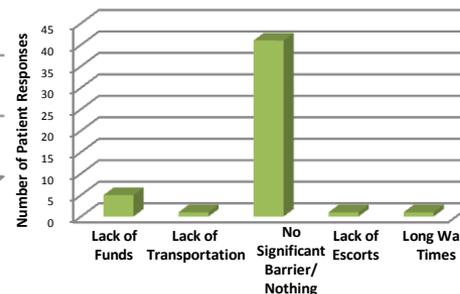
Patients understood the increased pressure, but about a quarter of the patients knew nothing about glaucoma.



After vision care treatment was received, patients realized the value of preventive vision care.



Patients had a difficult time noting specific barriers to vision care.



Acknowledgements

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References

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