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A new model of low vision rehabilitation

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Abstract

This presentation focusses on the disparity between the demonstrated effectiveness of low vision rehabilitation and the significant barriers which still exist to referral for, and access to, low vision rehabilitation services. Some of these barriers are societal and due to lack of information. But some are due to referral patterns of eye care professionals.

This talk covers the research which has demonstrated the effectiveness of low vision rehabilitation and the factors which influence access to low vision services as well as those that influence eye care professional's referral patterns. A new model is proposed which changes the way that low vision is conceived and which eye care professionals would be involved in low vision. Low vision care extends from the recognition of a potential low vision case to assessment of impairment, recognition of likely disabilities, goal setting, triage through to basic low vision rehabilitation and finally to managing patients with complex goals and multiple challenges. The levels of visual impairment at which low vision services are likely to be required is discussed. When considered in this light, it is suggested that all eye care professionals should be involved in low vision care, but that the level at which they are involved can be selected.

Biography

Susan Leat graduated in Optometry from the University of Manchester in the UK. She obtained her PhD and undertook post-doctoral studies at Cardiff University. She was founder of the Cardiff University Low Vision Clinic and instrumental in establishing the Special Assessment Clinic in Cardiff University. In 1991 she took up a Faculty position in the University of Waterloo, Canada where she is now a Professor and a clinician in the Pediatric and Special Needs Clinic. She teaches and conducts research in psychophysics, low vision, paediatrics, visual development, special needs and gerontology. She is a Fellow of the College of Optometrists (UK), a member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario, a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Optometry and Chair of the American Academy of Optometry SIG on Vision in Aging. She has co-authored a book on Paediatric Optometry entitled "Assessing Children's Vision – A Handbook" Publ. Butterworth-Heinemann 1999.