

Low vision aids

Millions of patients with eye ailments are benefited by immense development in medical field and global initiative of the World Health Organization to eliminate all treatable causes of blindness worldwide by year 2020 (known as “vision 20/20 by year 2020”). But what of those that we still cannot treat. Diseases like hereditary fundus dystrophies, advanced glaucoma and advanced age related macular degeneration still have no satisfactory cure. The extent of visual loss in these patients ranges from severe constriction of visual field with preservation of central vision to near blindness. In these cases, it does not suffice to merely inform these patients of the prognosis of their disease. There is much that we can offer.....

For most of these patients, the visual requirement is simple. Like all the rest of us, what they fear most is dependency on others. Younger people, still in the working age group, would like to be able to read and write receipts, verify and sign cheques, be able to manage numbers on a mobile phone. While others especially the elderly would just like to be able to read the Quran! For children with low vision, it is essential for them to be able to read so they continue their education. By making these simple daily tasks possible for a person with low vision, we can exponentially improve their quality of life. Help for all these people come in the form of LOW VISION AIDS.

Magnifiers seek to increase the size of an object (usually letters and writings) to enable the reader with low vision to read a newspaper for instance or the Quran. For far vision, telescopes are available that can be mounted on glasses. Patients with vision much worse, where the use of these aids is not possible, need to be counseled regarding minor adjustments in life style like the ideal settings in their room and their workplaces in general. Use of high contrast in for example the crockery and furniture, fully upholstered instead of wood furniture, bright colored curtains and cushions can serve as landmarks for orientation of a room. Finally the use of white stick. Here is also a good opportunity to provide guidance regarding social benefits and the means to obtain such.

Finally.... Braille. A hand felt code made of small protuberances on a paper was originally designed by a British Army General as a secretive code for his troops. In the early 19th century it was redesigned by a blind French boy named Brail to use for reading and further extended for mathematics and calculations. Braille revolutionized the education of blind people and those that had the will were able to achieve even Nobel prizes.

Being blind is truly one of the toughest hardships of this worldly life. Even the Quran lays emphasis on this as there is a Surah Abbas in praise of a blind Sahabi Abdullah Bin Ume Makhtoom (R.A). There is also a Hadith that has been narrated that “When Allah takes away the eyes of an individual, He promises him Jannah”. Eye care providers (ophthalmologists as well as optometrists and others) continue to endeavor to find a cure to the yet incurable eye diseases but our story does not end here. We are continually evolving low vision aids specifically tailored to meet the varied visual requirement that a person with low vision might have. We understand that every blind person is just as capable, just as intelligent as any sighted person and realize the need that his blindness should not be a hindrance to him in achieving what he has the potential to achieve.

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