Results of Vision Examinations of Mentally Handicapped Persons in Toronto

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of examinations of mentally handicapped persons in Toronto. Discussion is presented concerning the higher prevalence of vision problems in this population.

Abrégé

Ce travail présente les résultats de l'examen visuel d'un groupe de handicapés mentaux dans la ville de Toronto. La plus grand fréquence de problèmes visuels dans cet échantillon est notée ainsi que le besoins de surveiller ces populations de plus près.

During a two year period, 249 mentally retarded persons underwent vision examinations by the authors at their respective residences, adult development programs (ADP) or employment training centres (ETC).

The primary goal of an ADP is to help severely retarded adults learn skills which will facilitate their personal growth and help them become involved in the community. Personal growth and development may include learning skills for daily living, better communication, recreation and physical fitness. Community involvement encompasses learning to use community resources such as public transportation, keeping informed through newspapers, radio and television and learning to relate to one's surroundings.

The goal of employment training is successful employment, appropriate to the individual.

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social interaction have been observed among individuals who received care.5

It is evident that the high frequency of refractive errors and eye pathologies among this population places these persons “visually at risk”6 and in need of optometric care. Even after spectacle therapy, the residual impairment of vision leaves retarded persons at a considerable disadvantage. Consequently, their vision care should include modifications in environment and visual tasks to help them make maximum use of the vision available through spectacles, low vision devices, and vision therapy.

This is essential for the development of individuals in job placement programs, general tasks and their day-to-day lives.

In this population 66.4% persons presented with significant refractive errors. We referred 37% for further evaluation and found that the remaining 29.4% had adequate spectacle corrections at that time.

In a population of normal persons in these age ranges, only approximately 25% would be expected to have significant refractive errors, 5% ocular pathology, and 5% strabismus. In our sample we found 16.8% ocular pathology and 12% strabismus, proving that populations of mentally handicapped persons have a much higher frequency of vision problems. (See Table 3).

Conclusion:

Since the incidence of vision problems is significantly greater in the mentally handicapped population, it appears that vision assessment and correction should be an integral component of their health care program. We stress that vision problems should be detected as early as possible for maximum benefit.

References


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