The Madonna Minute

A briefing about the programs and innovations at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital

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Living with low vision

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Vision is our most far reaching sensory system. We receive 80 percent of our sensory information from our eyes[1]. Vision is the sensory system that alerts us to danger, warns us of upcoming challenges in our environment and gives us important information regarding our balance and posture for independent and safe mobility. Vision allows us to make day-to-day and minute-to-minute decisions about our environment and how to proceed through our environment.

More than 3.3 million Americans 40 years and older are either legally blind, having best-corrected visual acuity of 6/60 or worse (=20/200 in the better-seeing eye), or have low vision, with best-corrected visual acuity less than 6/12 or <20/40 in the better-seeing eye. The leading causes of blindness and low vision in the United States are primarily age-related eye diseases, such as age-related macular degeneration, cataract, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma. Other common eye disorders include amblyopia and strabismus. Vision loss is one of the top ten leading causes of disability in the United States.[2]

The loss of vision equates to loss of function. Individuals with low vision diagnoses experience limits of independence in daily self care tasks, employment, mobility, driving, reading, and daily interaction with people and the community. This can lead to loss of important occupations and ultimately isolation from their surroundings. However, a low vision diagnoses does not need to lead to the loss of independence. There is treatment and hope to sustain important occupations and full engagement in day to day activities with low vision.

Injuries or illnesses may cause changes in patients' vision, which may impact their balance, attention, reading or other skills. Dynavision™ 2000, a wallmounted instrument with touch-sensitive lights, is used by Madonna therapists to train compensatory scanning strategies and improve eye movement, eye-hand coordination and endurance.

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Rehabilitation by a specially trained low vision therapist can assist in maintaining or enhancing independence with low vision deficits. Occupational therapists are often the rehabilitation specialists in low vision rehabilitation. Low vision rehabilitation consists of compensatory training for low vision deficits, with or without assistive technology, to utilize in daily activities.[3]

Low vision specialists can educate patients in the use of assistive technology such as hand and stand magnifiers, electronic readers, and electro-optical magnifiers. Low vision specialists can also recommend and trial various optical and non-optical devices that can assist with independent living in the home and community such as talking watches,

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clocks, cooking timers, medication management tools, large print reading materials and calendars. Therapists can conduct low vision home assessments to recommend environmental modifications to make the home safe and accessible to facilitate independence with a low vision deficit.

Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital offers low vision rehabilitation by specially trained occupational therapists. The rehabilitation process begins with a 60-90 minute evaluation that assesses low vision deficits and its impact on function. Subsequent treatments are based on the initial evaluation and the patient's needs. If you are interested on a low vision evaluation or would like to know more about low vision services, feel free to call (402) 483-9534 or explore www.madonna.org for more information on our specialized services and programs.

For more information on Madonna's Vision Rehabilitation Program, contact Brooke Murtaugh at (402) 486-8647.

References

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