

# Caring for People with Vision Loss

*Presented by The Jewish Guild for the Blind, New York City  
In collaboration with the New York State Nurses Association*

## Slide Outline

### 1. Program Introduction

#### **The Jewish Guild for the Blind**

Moderator: Annemarie O'Hearn

*Vice President, Education & Training*

### 2. Introducing...

#### **Presenters:**

#### **Roy Cole, OD, FAAO**

*Director Vision Program Development*

The Jewish Guild for the Blind

#### **Yu-Pin Hsu, MS, OTR/L, EdD**

*Occupational Therapist, Harkness Eye Institute*

Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center

#### **Gordon Rovins, MS, CEAC**

*Director Special Programs*

The Jewish Guild for the Blind

### 3. Caring for People with Vision Loss

#### **Program Agenda**

1. Introduction of the program and the speakers
2. The impact of vision loss
3. Strategies to improve interactions with people with vision loss
4. Specialized low vision services
5. Adaptive techniques to support people with vision loss
6. Question and answer

## 4. Why Is This Important for You?

- ✓ Vision loss can cause difficulty in:
  - reading medical consent forms
  - reading medicine bottles
  - performing basic daily activities
  - self-monitoring of health conditions
  - seeing monitoring or treatment equipment
  - participating in rehabilitation activities
  
- ✓ People with vision loss have greater risk for falls.
- ✓ There are practice management issues for you and your staff, such as having to guide patients to exams rooms and possibly needing extra time with visually impaired patients.

## 5. The Impact of Vision Loss

- Does the clip show a person you think could read a newspaper?  
(Video clip)

## 6. Visual Acuity / Visual Field

- How sharp we see.
- How well we see to the sides. There can also be central field loss.

## 7. Contrast Sensitivity

- How hazy, or faded, things look.

## 8. Glare / Visual Skills & Binocularity / Color Vision

- How bright the light is.
- How well the eyes move and work together.
- How well we see color.

## 9. Normal Changes to the Aging Eye

- Reduced focusing power, particularly affecting near vision.
- Needs more light for some tasks, especially reading.
- Increased sensitivity to sunlight.
- Takes longer to adjust to changes in light levels.
- Does better with increased contrast.

## 10. Low Vision / Legal Blindness / Blindness

- **Low Vision:** An inability to see adequately with regular glasses. Sometimes defined as  $\leq 20/70$ .
- **Legal Blindness:** Vision is reduced below a certain cut-off. Acuity  $\leq 20/200$  or visual field  $\leq 20$  degrees. *Best-corrected, in better-seeing eye.*
- **Blindness (totally blind):** Cannot see at all. Vision is called “*No Light Perception*”

✓ NOTE: Sight Enhancement vs. Sight Substitution

## 11. Vision Changes in the Eye with Disease

- Overall Blurred (Hazy) Vision: e.g., Cataracts (Images)

## 12. Vision Changes in the Eye with Disease

- Poor Contrast or Glare: e.g., Cataracts (Images)

## 13. Vision Changes in the Eye with Disease

- Central Vision Loss/Blur (Scotoma): e.g., Macular Degeneration (Images)

## 14. Vision Changes in the Eye with Disease

- Different Representations of Macular Degeneration – by Patients (Images)

## 15. Vision Changes in the Eye with Disease

- Loss of Peripheral (Side) Vision: e.g., Glaucoma (Images)

## 16. Vision Changes in the Eye with Disease

- Multiple Impairments Can Occur: e.g., Diabetic Retinopathy (Images)

## 17. Vision Changes in Stroke and Head Trauma

(Images)

## 18. Charles Bonnet Syndrome

- Don't forget the possible significant psychological impact of Charles Bonnet syndrome.

## 19. Impact of Vision Loss

### Emotional: Normal and Expected Responses

- Helplessness
- Denial
- Anger
- Anxiety and Fear
- Frustration
- Embarrassment
- Boredom
- Sadness or Depression

➤ Losing sight is like losing a part of *yourself*. Intense grieving and emotions can be felt.

## 20. Impact of Vision Loss

- ✓ Behavioral
- ✓ Physical
- ✓ Social

## 21. Innovative Strategies to Improve Interactions with People with Vision Impairment

- Does the clip demonstrate a proper approach to assisting a person with vision loss to find their way?  
(Video clip)

## 22. Observable Signs and Reported Symptoms of Vision Impairment

### In general...

- **Observe:** Patient acts like having trouble seeing, or complains.
- **Ask:** "Are you having trouble doing things because of your vision?"
- **Record Review:** There is an indication in the patient's chart.

## 23. Observable Signs and Reported Symptoms of Vision Impairment

### Observe if the person:

- Squints or tilts their head to get things in focus?
- Holds items very close to see or read?
- Fails to recognize faces?
- Stumbles or bumps into things?
- Avoids activities that require vision?
- Has a cluttered or dusty home?

**Ask the person:**

- Do you have trouble with your eyes?
- Have you ever been told “nothing can be done” to help you see better?
- Has your vision changed since your last exam?
- Do you have trouble:
  - ✓ seeing with glasses on?
  - ✓ doing close up tasks?
  - ✓ seeing objects across a room?
  - ✓ doing activities that require vision?

## **24. Observable Signs and Reported Symptoms of Vision Impairment**

**Common examples of a possible vision problem:**

- **reading** (trouble seeing newsprint, or medication labels)
  - **writing** (trouble signing name, or writing information)
  - **grooming** (too heavily made up)
  - **walking across the room** (stumbles, bumps into things)
  - **eating** (makes a mess, food falls off plate)
  - **dressing** (wearing mismatched clothes in style / color)
  - **difficulty finding items** (e.g., trouble locating eye glasses)
  - **burn marks** (on hands or arms from cooking)
- Have you witnessed these types of behaviors in patients?

## **25. Assisting People with Vision Loss**

*Communication and interaction*

- ✓ DO introduce yourself.
- ✓ DON'T shout.
- ✓ DON'T use hand gestures when talking.

## **26. Assisting People with Vision Loss**

*Communication and interaction*

- ✓ DON'T leave out words like “see” or “look” when talking to visually impaired or blind people.
- ✓ DON'T push or grab a visually impaired or blind person.

## 27. Assisting People with Vision Loss

### *Communication and interaction*

- ✓ DON'T leave a visually impaired or blind person standing in an open space.
- ✓ DO tell a visually impaired or blind person when you are leaving the room.

## 28. Assisting People with Vision Loss

### *Communication and interaction*

#### **Communication and cueing are important factors in...**

- Bathing
  - Dressing
  - Toileting
  - Transferring
- ✓ Always say what you are going to do before you do it.
  - ✓ If the person's way of doing things is safe, don't change it.
  - ✓ Help the person establish new routines for accomplishing basic daily activities.

## 29. Assisting People with Vision Loss

### *Independent travel techniques*

- Long cane
- Trailing (with or without a cane)
- Guide dog

## 30. Assisting People with Vision Loss

### *The Guide Technique*

The Guide Technique is a safe and effective way to walk with a visually impaired person.  
(video clip)

## 31. Specialized Low Vision Rehabilitation Services

- "Can a totally blind person safely and effectively manage their own diabetes care, including glucose monitoring and insulin administration?"

## 32. Low Vision Examination

- **Functional History** - including chief complaint
- **Visual Acuity** – Distance and Near (with special charts)
- **Refractive Testing**

### 33. Low Vision Examination

- **Functional Testing – Fields, Contrast, and Glare**
- **Evaluate for Low Vision Interventions** (*sight-enhancement interventions vs. sight substitution*)

### 34. Low Vision Interventions

**Spectacles, Magnifiers and Telescopes**  
(video clip)

### 35. Low Vision Interventions

**Using a Strong Reading Lens Is Not Always Easy!**  
(video clip)

### 36. Low Vision Interventions

- **Closed Circuit Television**
- **Other Electro-Optical Systems**  
(video clip)

### 37. Low Vision Interventions

- ✓ **Lighting**
- ✓ **Contrast**
- ✓ **Filters & Glare Control**

### 38. Low Vision Interventions

- **Visual Field Loss – Central and Peripheral**
- **Visual Skills Training**
  - Fixations (looking at)
  - Pursuits (following)
  - Saccades (jumps)
- **Binocularity**
- **Color Vision**

### 39. Low Vision Interventions

- **E-Readers**
- **Tablets**
- **Phones that can read to you**

## 40. Rehabilitation Services

Occupational Therapy professionals and vision rehabilitation teachers provide instruction in adaptive techniques and devices that allow people with vision loss to safely and independently complete activities of daily living.

## 41. Diabetes Self-Management Education (*with Vision*)

(Images)

## 42. Diabetes Self-Management Education (*without Vision*)

(Images)

## 43. Support Services

- **Support groups:** people can talk about their problems with others.
- **Counseling:** most important for people who are feeling depressed.
- **Family members:** can be the main support source.
- **Telephone and web-based support:** provide anonymity and resources.

(e.g. [www.mdssupport.org](http://www.mdssupport.org) has a listserv for people with macular degeneration to talk with each other)

## 44. Finding and Accessing Services

### Private Low Vision Doctors

- Ask three optometrists and three ophthalmologists (preferably retinal specialists) who they recommend for low vision.
- Ask a school of optometry if there is one in your state.
- Ask your state's Optometry Association or the American Optometric Association for a list of doctors who do low vision.

### State Services for the Blind

- Most states have these services. They may be a division of a social services agency, department of health, or education department.
- Ask a PCP or eye doctor.

### Vision Rehabilitation Agencies

- A great entry point for many services. Some agencies operate low vision clinics and provide an array of rehabilitative and support services.
- Check the local phone book, call an area chamber of commerce, or ask an eye doctor.



## 45. Web based Resources

### *Organizations and Agencies*

- American Foundation for the Blind - [www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)
- National Eye Institute - [www.nei.nih.gov/health](http://www.nei.nih.gov/health)
- American Optometric Association - [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org)
- American Academy of Optometry - [www.aaopt.org](http://www.aaopt.org)
- American Academy of Ophthalmology - [www.aao.org](http://www.aao.org)
- MD Support - [www.mdsupport.org](http://www.mdsupport.org)
- The Jewish Guild for the Blind (SightCare) - [www.jgb.org](http://www.jgb.org)
- Lighthouse International - [www.lighthouse.org](http://www.lighthouse.org)

## 46. Web based Resources

### *Additional Information & Materials*

- NOAH – New York Online Access to Health - [www.noah-health.org](http://www.noah-health.org)
- Blindness and Visual Impairments Resources - [www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/lib\\_blnd.htm](http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/lib_blnd.htm)
- Living with Vision Loss: A Handbook for Caregivers - [www.cnib.ca/en/about/Publications/vision-health](http://www.cnib.ca/en/about/Publications/vision-health)
- VisionAware: Self-help resource center - [www.visionaware.org](http://www.visionaware.org)
- Library of Congress - Free Braille and audio materials - [www.loc.gov/nls/](http://www.loc.gov/nls/)
- Perkins Talking Book Library (MA, DC, ME, RI, NH) - [www.perkins.org/community-programs/btbl/](http://www.perkins.org/community-programs/btbl/)

## 47. Web based Resources

(MD Support website screen shot)

## 48. Adaptive Techniques and Devices to Support People with Vision Loss

- According to the Centers for Disease Control, what percentage of Americans over the age of 65 have vision impairment?

## 49. Prevalence of Vision Impairment

- 12% of Americans over the age of 65 report having vision impairment.

## 50. Activities of Daily Living – Cooking and Eating

*Create Contrast*

### **Good Contrast v. Poor Contrast**

- ✓ Contrast food to dishes
- ✓ Contrast dishes to tabletop

## 51. Activities of Daily Living – Cooking and Eating

*Create Contrast*

- ✓ Mark the key settings on a microwave
- ✓ Label the salt and pepper

## 52. Activities of Daily Living – Cooking and Eating

*Special plates and plate guards*

- ✓ Special plates and the use of plate guards can make eating much easier.
- ✓ Always set the plate and table in the same way.
- ✓ Don't change the position of items on them.

## 53. Activities of Daily Living – Cooking and Eating

- What do *you* think this device is used for? (image)

## 54. Activities of Daily Living – Cooking and Eating

*Say When*

- ✓ A battery-operated device that beeps when liquid reaches a certain point in the cup.  
(video clip)

## 55. Activities of Daily Living – Cooking and Eating

*The Clock Dial Method*

- ✓ The **clock-dial method** uses the familiar format of a clock face to describe the location of food on a plate.
- ✓ The same method can be applied to the whole tray, or even the whole table top.  
(video clip)

## 56. Activities of Daily Living – Cooking and Eating

### *Locating Food items or other objects*

- ✓ The edge of the tray can be followed to the proper position.
- ✓ The Finger-tip or “grid” method of locating food or objects.  
(video clip)

## 57. Activities of Daily Living

### *Managing Medications*

- ✓ Mark bottles with Braille strips, rubber bands, dots or hi-marks.
- ✓ Use pill organizers and blister packs.
- ✓ Help the patient establish a system that work best for them.
- ✓ Be aware of side effects.

## 58. Activities of Daily Living

### *Time Management*

- ✓ Watches with large numbers, hi contrast, and reversed contrast.
- ✓ Talking clocks (and watches).
- ✓ Large numbered clocks.
- ✓ Watches with Braille-like markings on them.  
(video clip)

## 59. Activities of Daily Living – Communication

### *Telephones*

- ✓ Addresses and phone numbers written in large print.
- ✓ Big-button phones and cell phones.
- ✓ Picture and voice response phones.
- ✓ Free operator assistance and dialing (check your carrier).

## 60. Activities of Daily Living – Communication

### *Writing*

- ✓ Black felt-tipped pen
- ✓ Bold lined white paper
- ✓ Writing guide
- ✓ Signature guide
- ✓ Check writing guide

## 61. Activities of Daily Living – Communication

### *Reading*

- ✓ Large type newspapers & magazines
- ✓ Portable readers
- ✓ Large print books
- ✓ Audio books
- ✓ E-Readers/Tablets

## 62. Activities of Daily Living – Communication

### *Adaptive Computers & Software*

- ✓ Enlarged and hi-contrast keyboard letters and monitor support arms
- ✓ Magnification software  
(video clip)

## 63. Activities of Daily Living – Non-Optical Devices

### *Online & Catalogues*

- **Maxi-Aids** - [www.maxiaids.com](http://www.maxiaids.com)
- **Independent Living Aids** - [www.independentliving.com](http://www.independentliving.com)
- **Shop Low Vision** - [www.shoplowvision.com](http://www.shoplowvision.com)

## 64. The Environment

### **Pay attention to:**

- ✓ Lighting
- ✓ Glare
- ✓ Contrast

**Create an Environment that is:**

- ✓ Safe
- ✓ Accessible

## **65. The Environment**

*Ensure proper lighting*

- Combination of lighting types and sources.
- Uniform lighting from room to room.
- Aim light at the task being performed, not at the eyes.
- Adjustable window shades and blinds.

## **66. The Environment**

*Control glare*

- Adjust curtains, shades, or blinds during the day.
- Use soft white bulbs and opaque shades on lamps.
- Place a carpet over shiny floors.
- Use a matte finish non-skid floor wax.
- Use paints with a flat finish, or use textured wallpaper.

## **67. The Environment**

*Control glare cont'd*

- Place the TV so it does not reflect light on the screen, and also so it is not positioned in front of a window.
- Place mirrors on the same wall as the window.

## **68. The Environment**

*Create contrast*

- Contrast sensitivity decreases with age and as a result of some eye diseases.
- Some combinations are more effective for optimal color contrast.

## 69. The Environment

*Create contrast cont'd*

- Use colors to create contrast wherever possible.
- Avoid beige, white-on-white and pastel color schemes.
- Avoid bold patterns.

## 70. The Environment

*Create contrast cont'd*

**Solutions can be simple and inexpensive!**

- ✓ A contrasting toilet seat.
- ✓ Electrical outlet covers and light switch plates in contrasting color to the wall.

## 71. The Environment

*Create contrast cont'd*

- ✓ Dark colored doors, doorframes, and baseboards against light walls.
- ✓ Contrasting signage.

## 72. The Environment

*Create contrast cont'd*

- ✓ Dark colored doors, doorframes, and baseboards against light walls.

## 73. The Environment

*Poor contrast*

(Images)

## 74. The Environment

*Visual and Cognitive Orientation*

(Images)

## 75. The Environment

### *Safety Considerations*

- Secure all scatter rugs.
- Mark stairs, landings, and install contrasting railing.
- Keep doors and drawers completely open or completely closed.
- Move furniture and other trip hazards out of walking paths.
- Install grab bars around the tub and toilet.

## 76. The Environment

### *Environmental control*

Can the person independently:

- ✓ Open the windows? Adjust the blinds?
- ✓ Open and close doors? Fit through the doors?
- ✓ Regulate room temperature?
- ✓ Turn the lights on and off?
- ✓ Turn water on and off & regulate temperature?
- ✓ Reach and operate the telephone?

## 77. Questions???

Question and Answer forum

## 78. Thank You

We hope you enjoyed the presentation!

Please feel free to contact us:

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