

Study about challenges in optometry in India

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Abstract:

Blindness and vision impairment continue to be significant public health issues in India. The National Programme for Control of Blindness has emphasized the need for cataract surgical services and refraction services to be augmented, both in quantity and quality, in order to achieve the goal of eliminating avoidable blindness by 2020.[1] Cataract continues to be the leading cause of blindness in India with three out of every four people, above the age of 50 years, blind due to cataract.[1] However, uncorrected refractive error remains a major cause of avoidable vision impairment and the second most common cause of blindness in India. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately 39.3 million, including 1.6 million children in India, are blind or visually impaired due to uncorrected refractive error.



Keywords: optometrist, eye health, blindness

Introduction

India has a proud tradition of blindness prevention, being the first country in the world to implement a blindness control programme which focused on a model to address blinding eye disease. However, with 133 million people blind or vision impaired due to the lack of an eye examination and provision of an appropriate pair of spectacles, it is imperative to establish a cadre of eye care professionals to work in conjunction with ophthalmologists to deliver comprehensive eye care. The integration of highly educated four year trained optometrists into primary health services is a practical means of correcting refractive error and detecting ocular disease, enabling co-managed care between ophthalmologists and optometrists. At present, the training of optometrists varies from two year trained ophthalmic assistants/optometrists or refractionists to four year degree trained optometrists. The profession of optometry in India is not regulated, integrated into the health care system or recognised by the majority of people in India as provider of comprehensive eye care services. In the last two years, the profession of optometry in India is beginning to take the necessary