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Human Senile Cataract occurring at a much earlier age in Africa than the rest of the world

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Background: Data on prevalence and causes of avoidable blindness in Africa suggest that human senile cataract is the commonest cause of avoidable blindness and accounts for approximately half of all cases. Routinely it has been known for many years that senile cataract occurs mainly after the age of 50.There is however increasing evidence that more and more cases of senile cataract are seen in much younger persons in Africa.

The purpose of this presentation is to highlight and debate reasons as to why persons many persons aged 50 and above develop cataract in Africa at a much earlier stage than what would normally be regarded as age for developing senile cataract.

Methodology: Data in regard to senile Cataract from population-based and clinical surveys in Africa will be presented and contrasted with data from hospital records which conduct high volume surgery in Africa. Clinical presentation of human senile cataract, challenges in determining differential diagnosis and current management of cataracts in Africa will be discussed and compared to presentation in the USA and other more developed areas. Implications for clinical service delivery and programme development for Africa will be discussed.

Conclusion: The prevalence of cataract blindness and visual impairment in persons aged 50 and above in Africa has been fairly documented .With more and more African patients developing mature senile cataract before reaching the age of 50, there is need to review available evidence as to the possible causes and focus on future solutions to address this avoidable causes of blindness in Africa. This presentation will highlight some of the challenges and solutions in addressing human senile cataracts in Africa.