



# Recognizing Mental Health Challenges in Glaucoma Patients with Vision Impairment

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## DESCRIPTION

Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness worldwide and affects millions of people. It is a group of eye conditions that damage the optic nerve, often due to increased pressure within the eye. As the disease progresses, it can cause gradual loss of vision, leading to significant visual impairment and in some cases, blindness. Patients with glaucoma who experience vision impairment often face additional challenges that extend beyond physical health. One of the most common and troubling aspects of living with glaucoma is the increased risk of depression. The emotional and psychological impact of vision loss can be overwhelming and many glaucoma patients struggle to maintain a positive outlook.

Depression among glaucoma patients with vision impairment is a growing concern and should be addressed as part of a comprehensive treatment plan. Research has shown that individuals with visual impairment are more likely to experience depression and anxiety compared to those with normal vision. The relationship between glaucoma, vision loss and depression is complex and involves several factors, including the psychological impact of losing sight, difficulties in performing daily activities and the frustration of managing a chronic disease.

Vision impairment, regardless of its severity, can significantly affect a person's quality of life. For glaucoma patients, the gradual and often unnoticed progression of vision loss can be especially challenging. As peripheral vision decreases, individuals may struggle with tasks that were once simple such as reading, driving, or recognizing faces. The sense of independence that many people take for granted is often diminished and patients may begin to feel isolated or helpless.

In addition to these practical difficulties, the emotional toll of vision loss can be profound. The inability to see properly can evoke feelings of sadness, frustration and anger. As glaucoma progresses, patients may face the possibility of complete blindness, a thought that can be deeply distressing. The fear of losing one's sight can contribute to a sense of hopelessness and

despair. This emotional burden is one of the key contributors to depression in glaucoma patients.

Depression is a serious mental health condition that can affect anyone, but it is especially common among individuals with chronic health conditions, including glaucoma. Depression is characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness and a loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyable. Glaucoma patients may withdraw from social activities due to difficulty seeing and participating in conversations or group settings. This isolation can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and sadness. As glaucoma patients experience vision loss, they may struggle to stay motivated to manage their condition or engage in daily activities. This lack of motivation can lead to a sense of worthlessness or helplessness. Anxiety is common in individuals with vision impairment. Glaucoma patients may worry about their ability to navigate daily life, fear further vision deterioration, or become anxious about the possibility of complete blindness. Depression often affects sleep, leading to insomnia or excessive sleeping. Glaucoma patients may find it difficult to sleep due to discomfort from their eyes, anxiety about their vision, or emotional distress. Depression can also cause physical symptoms such as fatigue, headaches, or a lack of energy. These symptoms can further complicate the management of glaucoma and vision impairment. The emotional burden of glaucoma and vision loss can make it difficult for patients to focus on tasks. This can affect their ability to work, study, or engage in hobbies they once enjoyed.

Depression is not always easy to detect, as the symptoms can overlap with the physical effects of glaucoma or other health conditions. Patients may not always recognize that their emotional state is contributing to their overall health issues. However, untreated depression can worsen the symptoms of glaucoma and make it more difficult for patients to cope with their vision impairment.

Depression is a common and serious issue for glaucoma patients with vision impairment. The emotional impact of vision loss can be profound and often exacerbates the challenges faced by

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individuals already managing a chronic condition. However, with the right support and interventions, depression can be addressed and managed effectively. By incorporating mental health care into glaucoma treatment, healthcare providers can help patients maintain both their physical and emotional well-

being. Early screening for depression, psychological support, medication and vision rehabilitation are all critical components of a comprehensive approach to managing glaucoma and improving the quality of life for those affected by vision impairment.