The Prevalence of Visual Impairment in People with Dementia (the PrOVIDe study): a cross-sectional study of people aged 60–89 years with dementia and qualitative exploration of individual, carer and professional perspectives

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Plain English summary

The key research questions of this study were (1) what is the prevalence of (how common are) vision problems in people with dementia aged 60–89 years?; and (2) how often are these problems undetected or inappropriately managed?

In stage 1, 708 people with dementia had an eye examination. Nearly one-third of participants in whom vision could be measured were visually impaired (had significant sight loss) according to an established definition. Almost half of the visually impaired were no longer visually impaired with up-to-date spectacle prescriptions. Among the remainder, nearly half were visually impaired as a result of cataracts, which could be removed. Important parts of the eye examination were possible in > 80% of participants.

In stage 2, interviews were conducted with people with dementia and care workers. Focus groups (small groups of people brought together to give their opinions) were held with family carers, care workers and optometrists.

The focus groups with family and professional carers revealed that:

- eye examinations were considered important
- there was uncertainty regarding whether or not eye examinations for people with dementia were possible
- there was insufficient information about the availability of domiciliary (provided to people in their own homes) eye-care services
- there was room for possible improvements to eye care for people with dementia.

The focus groups with optometrists revealed:

- the desire to gain knowledge about, and skills needed to provide better services to, people with dementia
- advance information, given when making the appointment, that a patient had dementia would help the optometrist to accommodate individual needs.

Research is needed to see if early cataract removal, by improving vision, slows the progression of cognitive impairment.
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