

Awareness among Visually Disabled Individuals

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EDITORIAL NOTE

In India, about five million people are suffering from visual disability [1]. Visually disabled includes blind people and people with low vision. Visual impairment causes difficulties in everyday living and can be associated with increased risk of depression, decreased functional status and quality of life. Intervention in the form of assistive aid or technological support is required for the disabled individuals for their mobility, daily living skills, to get education or employment and to compete with their counterpart in the society [2].

The certification for blindness is the process by which social services for the visually disabled is coordinated. The minimum degree of disability should be 40% for an individual to be eligible for any concessions or benefit according to the guideline of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of the Government of India [3]. Rehabilitation is operated primarily by the nodal agency Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment [2]. It has been realized that a majority of persons with disabilities can lead a better life if they have equal opportunities and effective access to rehabilitation measures.

This study is undertaken to assess the rehabilitation measures utilized by visually disabled individuals and to assess their knowledge and attitude regarding various rehabilitation measures [4].

"Blindness" refers to a condition where a person suffers from either total absence of sight or best corrected visual acuity not exceeding 6/60 or 20/200 in the better eye; or limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degree or worse [3].

"Person with low vision" means a person with impairment of vision of less than 6/18 to 6/60 with best correction in better eye or impairment of field of vision in any of the following

categories: reduction of fields less than 50 degrees or hemianopia with macular involvement or altitudinal defect involving lower fields [3].

Persons with disability can lead a better quality of life if they have equal opportunities and effective access to rehabilitation measures which will help them to attain the highest possible level of functional ability so that they lead an independent, self-sufficient and successful life.

However in spite of activities, programs/schemes, institutional structure and initiatives taken by the Government of India (GOI) for the rehabilitation of disabled and the incentives/benefits extended to blind persons, the awareness and utilization of the above was very low [5].

This study emphasizes the importance of creating awareness regarding the availability, access and provision of comprehensive services for the visually disabled individuals.

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