

## ABSTRACT

The desire to conserve sight, to prevent blindness is one of the earliest aspirations of medical service. A population based cross sectional prevalence survey of visual impairment was conducted in the area of Divisional Director of Health Services Rambukkana. A sample of 521 people aged 15 years and over were selected using cluster sampling technique. The age and sex distribution of the sample was similar to that of the study population. The study has basically two components.

1. Clinical component of the study included the testing of visual acuity, primary and special eye examination.
2. Knowledge of, attitudes shown and practices towards eye care.

The data reveals that the overall prevalence of visual impairment is 10.94 percent. The prevalence by low vision amounts to 9.6 and blindness 1.34 percent respectively.

There is no significant difference in the prevalence of visual impairment between males and females. (Female 6.7% and male 4.2%) Also the study has revealed that the monocular visual impairment amounts to 5.57 percent (low vision 4.6% and blindness 0.96% ) and the binocular visual impairment as the 9.4% (low vision 7.1% and blindness 2.3%). Compared with monocular blindness (0.96%)

there is a much greater prevalence of bilateral blindness (2.3%) in the sample. The prevalence is increased with age, peaking in the older age group.

Unoperated cataract was responsible for 33.3% of visual impairment and uncorrected aphakia was seen in 7.8%. So that a total of 41.1% of visual impairment had been attributed to cataract and its complications. Other causes of visual impairment were, squint (3.8%). Retinopathy (2.6%). Degenerative changes (2.6%) and Glaucoma (1.2%).

The overall knowledge in eye health seems to be satisfactory. The mean score obtained was 60.3%. A significant difference of knowledge between age groups and educational groups were observed, but not between males and females.

The attitude towards consanguinity and squint are not favourable. Most of the sample population (86.7%) seek western medical treatment as their first preference.

The study has revealed that a backlog of visually impaired people are trapped in the rural village and it suggests, that the eye care services has to be extended much more in to the rural community.

