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The Value of Eye-Health Screening in the Asian Community

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Abstract

The cost of blindness is enormous both in human and economic terms. Our previous study on Asian Americans has demonstrated that a high percentage of blindness and visual impairment is preventable. Organization of community efforts to detect conditions which may lead to blindness can greatly enhance the chance of successful treatment. In the past 12 months, three different community agencies in San Francisco Chinatown have sponsored eye-health screening projects. The results of these projects were compared and evaluated. Out of the 281 people examined, 84 (29.8%) were recommended for further evaluation. The most common reasons for referrals were visual impairment (10%), elevated OP (5.3%), cataracts (4.9%), retinal problems (4.6%) and abnormal optic cupping (3.2%). The importance of these screening services is obvious. In order to accomplish higher effectiveness and efficiency, good coordination of community resources is necessary. This involves proper identification of resources and budget planning, manpower allocation and training, application of more uniform evaluation and reporting methodology with project outcome analysis and follow-ups. Education of the public and other health professionals on the importance of eye-health screening should be incorporated in future programs.