



# ViewFinder E-News

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## **New Service for People with Low Vision**

Last fall we began an exciting new venture. ViewFinder Low Vision Resource Center expanded vision rehabilitation services for our clients. Under the direction of Janet Menke, OTR/L, we now provide the services of occupational therapists who specializes in low vision treatment techniques. The therapists will see the patient in the clinic and in the home to provide training in the use of low vision aids and help in home modification. This will help ensure safety and independence.

Occupational therapy is uniquely qualified to see our low vision patients. They are skilled to evaluate the patient in all areas of function:

cognition, psychosocial, functional mobility, strength and coordination and activities of daily living. If a patient has other diagnoses such as stroke or arthritis, the occupational therapist is well qualified to address any issues that may affect their functional independence.

Because occupational therapy is a skilled rehabilitation service, the evaluation and treatment sessions are covered by Medicare and third party insurers. There is often no cost to the patient for the services. If you have patients who would benefit from an occupational therapy evaluation or consult, please do not hesitate to call. Contact Janet Menke, OTR/L, Director of the Low Vision Program at 480-924-6101

## **New EP Lens Increases Visual Field in Patients with a Homonymous Hemianopsia**

The loss of half or a quarter of the visual field on one side in both eyes is a very common consequence of brain damage from either a stroke or head injury. This visual field loss causes a major problem with safe and independent navigation. The most commonly used technique for the optical treatment of hemianopsia is the placement of sector prisms on the patient's glasses in the non-seeing portion of the visual field. The prism is added to the glasses with either Fresnel press-on prisms, a wedge of prism glued to the back of the lens or with a molded lens. This type of prism placement has drawbacks in that it

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requires intentional scanning on the part of the patient and does not actually increase the patient's visual field. It increase the patient's awareness of the missing visual field.

*EP Lenses* are now available and can actually increase the measured visual field in each eye by 20 degrees. Prisms are mounted across the top and bottom of one lens in a pair of eyeglasses. The prisms pick up images from the missing portion of the visual field and directs them to the seeing part of the visual field. The prism expands the visual field by creating peripheral diplopia or double vision while the patient maintains single vision centrally. The images from the prism are seen as ghost images that act like a cue alerting the person that an object is nearby. We are now in the process of fitting and training patients in the use of these lenses.

### **Management of the Low Vision Patient**

The goal of low vision rehabilitation is not to get the patient to see 20/20. The purpose is to help the patient function independently in his own environment and to help the patient continue with their career, hobbies and other daily living activities.

The real world does not require 20/20 vision:

- ◆ Newsprint requires 20/50 vision
- ◆ Menu at McDonald's requires 20/80 vision
- ◆ Grooming requires 20/50—20/100 vision
- ◆ Microwave control require 20/100 vision

Independence is threatened when corrected visual acuity falls below 20/60. At this point, the patient needs to be introduced to custom and pre-made low vision aids, daily living aids and adaptive technology. The patient should also be introduced to many rehabilitation services and agencies available to assist the visually impaired. This will help ensure the patient's success and continued independence. Medicare and most private insurances will cover low vision rehabilitation when the patient presents with a visual acuity of 20/70 or worse.

### **Miscellaneous News:**

- ◆ The winner of the ViewFinder Teacher & Student Low Vision Aid Grant for the first quarter of 2005 was Paulette Melick. Congratulations to Paulette's students. Requests for the second quarter 2005 ViewFinder Teacher & Student Low Vision Aid Grant are due by June 30, 2005.
- ◆ The Vision Rehabilitation & Technology Expo 2005 will be held on November 18 & 19, 2005 at the Phoenix Civic Plaza. Go to [VRATE.org](http://VRATE.org) for more information.
- ◆ The Video Visible Telescope by Betacom is a product that delivers 40X magnification at distance and is a great product for people who need more magnification than can be provided by a monocular telescope. With the demise of Betacom, the product no longer has a warranty. ViewFinder has 3 VVT's in stock and will donate them to anyone who would benefit from this product. Please call for more information.

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