

STATISTICS SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S COMPREHENSIVE VISION EXAMINATIONS

80 percent of all learning during a child's first 12 years is obtained through vision. *Journal of Behavior Optometry, Visual Screening of Adjudicated Adolescents, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1999.*

Vision disorders are the fourth most common disability in the United States and the most prevalent handicapping condition in children. *Current Ophthalmology Vol. 43, No. 5 March-April 1999, A Survey of Vision Screening Policy of Preschool Children in the United States.*

The Journal of the American Public Health Association reports that 10% of pre-schoolers (75,200 Pennsylvania pre-school children) have vision deficiencies. This figure increases in grades K through 6 to 25% or one-in-four Pennsylvania children (318,000 children). The prevalence of vision disorders is even higher in children at risk or special needs children, *Journal of the American Public Health Association.*

The need for a comprehensive vision examination should not be confused with the need for quality vision screening programs. Each has a different purpose and generates different results. *Schmidt P.P. Vision screening. In: Rosenbloom AA, Morgan MW, eds. Principles and Practices of Pediatric Optometry. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co 1990: 474.*

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, detection of eye abnormalities in the pediatric age group is particularly important because of the critical difference between the visual system of the child and that of the adult. Infants and young children are uniquely susceptible to permanent central vision loss from uncorrected refractive errors, strabismus, cataracts and other conditions that affect the quality of the visual image. *The American Academy of Ophthalmology, Pediatric Eye Evaluations, 1999.*

Only 14% of children in the United States have received a comprehensive eye examination by age six. *Cigna, E.B., Schmidt, P.P., Orel-Bixler, D., Dobson, V., Maquire, m., Cyert, L., Moore, B., Schultz, J., A Survey of Vision Screening Policy of Pre-School Children in the United States, Current Ophthalmology, Vol. 43, No. 5, March-April 1999.*

The most serious of these conditions is amblyopia. Yet the American Journal of Ophthalmology reports that half of all children with amblyopia are diagnosed **after** the age of five when therapy and correction is often no longer as effective. *Current Ophthalmology Vol. 43, No. 5 March-April 1999, A Survey of Vision Screening Policy of Preschool Children in the United States.*

The National Parent Teacher Association reports that more than ten million children suffer from visual problems, yet vision exams still are not a part of a child's school readiness package. *American Foundation for Vision Awareness, Children's Vision and Literacy Campaign.*

Vision problems are also associated with the inability to master higher math concepts, reading comprehension and spelling. This is a very important part of vision in that approximately 75% of every school day is spent reading and writing. *American Optometric Association, Pediatric Eye and Vision Examination, Optometric Clinical Practice Guideline, 1994.*

Research indicates that among the 20 percent of school age children who have a learning disability in reading, 70 percent of them have some form of visual impairment, such as ocular motor, perception or binocular dysfunction, which may be interfering with their reading skills. *Optometry, The Journal of the American Optometric Association, Practice Strategies: Back to School, Vol 71, No. 8 August 2000.*

Children with vision-related learning problems revealed that they were experiencing feelings such as a lack of direction, a sense of not belonging, an inadequate sense of self-assurance and a feeling of insecurity, inadequacy and inferiority. *Joel N. Zaba, Vision s relationship to delinquency, illiteracy and learning problems, 2001.*

Studies find that primary care physicians are not consistently conducting pediatric vision screening during clinical visits. *American Family Physician, September 1, 1998.*