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1. Watson CR, Wilson AC. Exper. Res. 2010; 1: 8-15.
2. Walsh S, Walsh W. J. Pathol. Res. 2003; 4: 612- 624.

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Paediatric vision screening (for amblyopia and strabismus) is important to children's vision correction before adolescence. In our community in Ontario, Canada, screening is carried out by trained volunteers with parental permission. This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of this program by three methods, and develop strategies for improvement.

We evaluated screening by three methods: 57 kindergarten students were screened both by trained ophthalmic technicians and screening volunteers. Children who failed were notified and a full eye examination was recommended. We found that volunteers have a higher rate of failed screenings, but are effective at identifying children requiring vision care. This is important to vision screening accessibility in smaller communities. Three months after screenings we surveyed parents of 106 children who failed their screening; 41% (43/106) had been seen by an eye care professional, largely due to a lack of parental awareness. This is a significant barrier that we have identified to screening effectiveness, but is very amenable to improvement. Finally, we surveyed local GPs with regard to their knowledge and participation in vision screening at paediatric visits. Physicians rated vision screening as important but less than half had specific awareness of their role and self-rated confidence on testing vision was poor, furthering the need for vision screening by public health bodies.

Our study indicates that a more coordinated follow-up system and increased parental awareness would significantly improve the effectiveness of vision screening programs, and makes recommendations as to how this may be achieved.

Ethical approval for this work was granted by the Peterborough Regional Health Center and the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board Research Ethics Boards.

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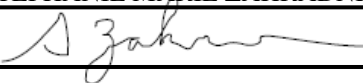
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