

From theory to practice: visual rehabilitation for ophthalmologists

Da teoria à prática: reabilitação visual para oftalmologistas

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Visual rehabilitation is one of the most humane and transformative pillars of contemporary ophthalmology. At a time when genetic diagnostics, personalized treatments, and cutting-edge technologies are rapidly advancing, it is essential to reaffirm that comprehensive care for the visually impaired goes far beyond curing: it involves welcoming, functionality, and autonomy.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 2.2 billion people live with some form of visual impairment, and at least 1 billion of these cases could have been prevented or have not yet received adequate assistance. These data show the need for an integrated, continuous, and person-centered eye care model, as proposed by the WHO in its Integrated People-Centered Eye Care initiative¹.

In this context, visual rehabilitation plays a strategic role. It is not the final stage of ophthalmic treatment but a natural extension of care—a process that offers visually impaired people resources, strategies, and interventions that promote independence, effective communication, and social inclusion. Although ophthalmology has made remarkable achievements in preventing avoidable blindness, the current challenge is to broaden our view beyond diagnosis and treatment and incorporate visual rehabilitation as an inseparable part of clinical practice.

The Brazilian Council of Ophthalmology (CBO) has endeavored to strengthen the network of care for the visually impaired by encouraging the training and engagement of ophthalmologists throughout the country. In line with these efforts, CBO's Visual Rehabilitation project aims to promote knowledge, bring professionals together, and encourage the creation of care flows that allow patients to move smoothly and with dignity from diagnosis to rehabilitation.

This Special Edition of eOftalmo was created as part of this movement. It brings together some of Brazil's leading experts on the subject, who present a comprehensive and practical approach to visual rehabilitation in all its dimensions—from epidemiology to assistive technology, from childhood to adulthood, and from clinical assessment to interdisciplinary assistance.

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The issue opens with an overview of visual impairment, which highlights the challenges and barriers to care access that exist in Brazil. It then revisits the fundamental concepts of visual rehabilitation and the role of an ophthalmologist in this process. It also covers functional vision assessment, the use of optical and non-optical resources, emerging technologies based on artificial intelligence and augmented reality, and even the role of contact lenses in low vision.

The articles also include eye assessment from a rehabilitation perspective, visual habilitation in childhood, and the multidisciplinary approach that integrates occupational therapists, psychologists, educators, and social workers. Finally, the reader will find an analysis of national and international visual rehabilitation networks, with an emphasis on the importance of strengthening public services and expanding access to specialized care.

By bringing together this set of topics, eOftalmo aims to offer Brazilian ophthalmologists a tool for

updating and reflection, with the reaffirmation of the CBO's commitment to a person-centered, inclusive, and socially committed ophthalmology practice.

We hope that this special issue will inspire the clinical and human vision of its readers and contribute to visual rehabilitation being increasingly recognized as an essential part of ophthalmology practice in Brazil.

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