Improving visual prognosis of glaucoma patients during the past 30 years based on the data of the Finnish Register of Visual Impairment

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Purpose: The Finnish Register of Visual Impairment is a national register regulated by the Act and Decree on National Personal Records kept under the Health Care System. Health Care Providers are, under the above-mentioned Act, responsible to forward to the Register such information on persons with visual impairment (VI). In order to evaluate the changes in VI due to glaucoma during the past 30 years was statistically analyzed.

Methods: Statistical analysis of the visual impaired persons in the register (n=42,626 of which 16,747 are alive) in Finland (population 5.3 mil) was analyzed in three 10 year cohorts in order to get information on the age at the time of the notification of VI, the severity of the impairment and the mean age of the death of the patients. VI is determined on the basis of WHO definition. WHO classes 3-5 are regarded as blind.

Results: Altogether data of 6,778 patients (4,340 females 66% and 2,438 34% males) whose primary cause for their VI was registered as glaucoma. The mean age of at the time of notification of VI for the three cohorts were 74.9, 77.5 and 79.4 years. The age of death of the three cohorts was 84.7, 86.2 and 86.1 years in PDR group and 76, 79 and 78 years in the NPDR group.

Conclusions: There has been a change of the profile of the VI in glaucoma characterized by increased age at the time of VI notification while there has been very little change in the severity of VI and prolonged life expectancy. The increased age at the time of the notification of VI reflects the improved therapy and prognosis of glaucoma during the recent 30 years.