



AOP RESPONSE

on-line survey for the World Health Organization's Collaborating Centre for Patient Safety.

We are pleased that visual impairments including impaired depth perception and edge contrast sensitivity have been included in the report. There is indeed overwhelming evidence that visual impairment is strongly associated with falls. We would welcome a Falls Prevention Strategy that includes a report from the Optometrist as part of the patients individualised risk assessment.

Optometrists are trained to detect visual impairments such as cataracts, macula degeneration, glaucoma and different types of visual field loss and offer appropriate advice. Furthermore simple spectacle correction can help eliminate visual impairment. A UK study showed that 30% of visual impairment in the over 75s was due to spectacle correction¹

Unfortunately older patients who do become aware of visual difficulty find it difficult to attend a routine high street eye examination due to mobility problems caused by the visual impairment itself.

NHS domiciliary eye exams are available free of charge to those unable to attend their high street practice due to poor mobility.

¹ Evans J R et al Prevalence of visual impairment in people aged 75 and older in Britain: results from the MRC trial of assessment and management of older people in the community BJOPhth 86: 795-800,2002