

WORLD EYE AND VISION CONGRESS

September 06-08, 2018 Dubai, UAE

Neonatal and early vision screening for Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) challenges in Dubai, 2017

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Background: Neonatal and early screening is aimed at the primary prevention of visually impairing disease (e.g. mainly premature infant require a consistent approach to screen them for Retinopathy of prematurity ROP). ROP is one of the few causes of childhood visual disability, which is largely preventable. The screening can as well detect other congenital blinding eye diseases like cataract or Glaucoma that can be treated to prevent permanent visual loss. In addition other diseases that can pick early may include the autosomal recessive inheritance disorders that are the causes for retinal dystrophies such as Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) and Leber's congenital amaurosis (LCA).

Method: A qualitative methodology approach is used. An in-depth interview sessions were conducted concentrating on specific topics related to Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP).

Participants: The in-depth sessions consisted of three ophthalmologists working in Dubai, with extensive knowledge about vision programs and services.

Setting: Three sessions were performed during January- June 2017.

Key findings:

1. Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) is one of the few causes of childhood visual disability which is largely preventable. Many extremely preterm babies will develop some degree of ROP, which usually resolves spontaneously without treatment. A small proportion, develop potentially severe ROP which can be detected through retinal screening. If untreated, it can result in serious vision impairment. Therefore, all babies at risk of sight-threatening ROP should be screened.
2. Among children, Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) is potentially blinding eye disorder that primarily affects premature infants. The estimated prevalence is about 10% among premature infants annually develop ROP and about 1–2% that are severe enough to require medical treatment. There is no follow up studies in Dubai to show how many of these each year become blind from ROP.
3. Currently different hospitals used different international guidelines to tackle ROP. However, A local Guideline for the Screening and Treatment of Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) is required to set up the standards and criteria when ROP should be screened.

Biography:

Fellow of the Royal college of physicians and surgeons of Glasgow (FRCP – Glasgow). Hold a Doctorate degree in Public Health and Epidemiology, Master degree in Clinical Epidemiology (MSc), Master degree in Public Health (MPH), all from The Netherlands Universities with broad experience driving Research and Development (R&D) strategies and operations.

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