

# WORLD EYE AND VISION CONGRESS

May 20-21, 2019 | Dubai, UAE

## Task sharing in the eye care workforce to prevent vision loss due to diabetic retinopathy through early detection and timely treatment

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**Purpose:** Team work approach to screen, detect and manage diabetic retinopathy (DR) could improve coverage of people with diabetes mellitus to prevent vision loss due to DR. This study aimed to investigate the potential roles of ophthalmologists, optometrists and mid-level eye care workers in management of DR in low resource countries through Task Sharing.

**Methods:** Using purposive sampling, a cross-sectional survey was conducted from 121 eye and health care workers in five selected hospitals in two provinces in Pakistan. That was followed by 22 key informant interviews which focused on 7 themes including understanding the situation and perspectives about eye care services for DR, task sharing, policy and guidelines for task sharing.

**Results:** Ninety-six (79%) participants—doctors (n = 56), optometrists (n = 29) and mid-level eye

care workers (n = 11) responded to the survey. All participants supported task sharing in screening and detection for management of DR. There was no significant difference among the groups with respect to their positive attitude towards task sharing ( $p = 0.22$ ). The majority in each group believed that the task sharing would not degrade the quality of care ( $p = 0.48$ ). Two potential major outcomes of task sharing in the eye care system included the benefits for people with diabetes and potential DR and the strengthening of the health care system.

**Conclusion:** Task sharing among all cadres of eye care workers could help to achieve greater coverage to prevent loss of vision from DR. There is need of policy and guidelines to reinforce task sharing in low resource countries.

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