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WORLD HEALTH DAY
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Seniors and Blindness Prevention

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that up to 80% of blindness is avoidable and the result of diseases that can be prevented or treated to restore vision. The majority of blind people are over age 50.

To address the problem, countries need national eye care plans that integrate ophthalmological services into primary care systems to ensure people have access to these services.

Key facts

- Some 65% of people with visual impairment are over age 50, an age group that represents 20% of the global population. As the world's population ages, the number of people with age-related visual impairment is expected to increase.
- The prevalence of blindness in people 50 and over varies from 2.3% to 3%, according to national surveys. Prevalence is much higher in rural than in urban areas.
- In Latin America, some 60% of cases of blindness overall are due to untreated cataracts, but again the proportion is higher in rural than in urban areas.
- In developed urban areas, about 80% of people with serious visual impairment have access to ophthalmological care, but only 10% have access to such care in rural and remote zones.

Links:

WHO: Visual impairment and blindness

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs282/en/index.html>

PAHO: Prevention of blindness and eye care

http://new.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=1177&Itemid=612&lang=en

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