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Measuring vision-related quality of life in people with an early and late onset visual impairment

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Introduction: It is common thought that those who go through a sight loss have a worse quality of life than their seeing counterparts. Vision loss negatively affects on a person's life, causing limitations in social participation, working difficulties and so forth. However, less known is how the age of onset blindness impacts in individuals' quality of life. Our purpose was to explore vision-related quality of life (VR-QoL) among people with VI depending on the age of onset visual impairment (VI).

Methods: blind and severe visually impaired people from several associations and universities from Spain participated in this study. They were classified into the early onset VI group (EB) (n=15) and late onset VI group (LB) (n=14). Subjects were interviewed in the second trimester of 2021. VR-QoL was estimated through the National Eye Institute Visual Function Questionnaire (NEI VFQ-25).

Results: We found statistically significant differences in some subscales of the NEI VFQ-25 ($p \leq 0.05$). EB participants obtained better scores in the subscales of dependence (71.66±15.04), role difficulties (87.5[62.5;100.0]) and in the questionnaire total score 35.6±7.86). LB had better scores in the subscale of peripheral vision (25.0[18.7;31.2]). We did not find differences in other subscales of the NEI VFQ-25 between EB and LB groups.

Conclusions: People with EB have better scores in several domains of the VR-QoL, suggesting a better adaptation to their visual circumstances. This could be due to a longer time living with the VI.

Biography

Mónica-Alba Ahulló-Fuster has her expertise in the field of neurorehabilitation. Her line research is linked to the improvement of visually impaired people's quality of life. She is working with the research group of the renowned researcher, Tomás Ortiz, for the development of a new sensory substitution system for individuals with a visual impairment based on tactile stimulation and neuroplasticity. Tomás Ortiz has developed his model after years of teaching and researching at University Complutense of Madrid. On the other hand, both M.Luz Sánchez-Sánchez and Enrique Varela-Donoso are experts in rehabilitation and biomechanics research. They have a great amount of experience teaching at university and in the treatment of patients with neurological problems, such as stroke.