

Joint UK Domiciliary Eyecare Committee

Statement

Visual Field Screening in Domiciliary Settings

July 2011

For the attention of PCTs, LHBS, AHBs, domiciliary eye care providers (GOS Additional Services Contractors) and domiciliary practitioners.

In July 2010 the Joint UK Domiciliary Eyecare Committee (DEC) reported that there was confusion amongst PCTs, LHBS, AHBs and optometric advisers regarding appropriate visual field screening (VFS) methods for patients in a domiciliary setting and in particular, whether electronic Visual Field Screeners should be required equipment for GOS Additional Services contractors.

In order to arrive at an evidence-based position on appropriate VFS methods and appropriate equipment requirements, the DEC agreed to carry out research to include an audit of VFS equipment held by Additional Services contractors in a sample of PCT areas and an audit of a sample of domiciliary sight tests (carried out in a one month period across the UK) to determine both the equipment available to the domiciliary practitioner at each patient visit and the practitioner's evaluation of the patient's ability to comply with different VFS methods.

Pending evidence, the DEC advised that the safest requirement for domiciliary patients was for all domiciliary providers to ensure that a portable means for testing visual fields (either manual or electronic) was routinely available, in addition to confrontation testing for all patients.

Peer Practice

In the meantime, the AOP carried out a survey of its members. Results published in *Optometry Today* [1], showed that only a minority of domiciliary practitioner respondents had access to a portable threshold controlled electronic visual field analyser (eVFA) and that less than 1% of these regularly made use of one.

From this, it was clear that it is not currently peer practice to possess or use a portable eVFA in a domiciliary setting and that this should not be a requirement for holding an NHS domiciliary sight testing contract.

On the basis of legal advice from a QC the AOP has recently challenged a consortium of 7 PCTs on this matter by filing for judicial review in defence of one of its members [2]. The substantive matters which were the subject of the proceedings

have now been settled and the lead PCT of the consortium has made the following statement through its solicitors:

The PCT confirms that it will not place a mandatory requirement on Additional Ophthalmic Services Contractors requiring them to have a form of portable threshold controlled electronic visual fields analyser. Nor will it be a mandatory requirement to possess such equipment in order for an Additional Services Contract to be granted.

Evidence

In light of the AOP survey and the agreement reached with the PCT consortium on this issue the DEC decided not to implement the research it had planned.

The DEC notes that there is a need for evidence on patients' ability to comply with the different forms of Visual Fields Screeners.

Advice

In light of the developments outlined above, the view of the DEC remains that a means of testing visual fields, which produces recordable results (for example the Damato Campimeter) in addition to confrontation targets, should be routinely available for all patients, although this may be manual or electronic.

The DEC will keep this issue under review and will update its position should new evidence be published or should there be an alteration to peer practice.

Joint UK Domiciliary Eyecare Committee

References

1. New survey on visual field screening in the domiciliary setting
D.Craig , T.Warburton
Optometry Today 25 March 2011
<http://www.optometry.co.uk/uploads/articles/new-survey-in-visual-field-screening-in-the-domiciliary-setting.pdf>
2. <http://www.optometry.co.uk/news-and-features/features/?article=2421>
Optometry Today 17th June 2011

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