

Eye camp and its impact on the patients and community

Abstract:

Eye camps are vital for enhancing eye health in underserved communities. Eye camp organizers meticulously plan, promote, and provide comprehensive eye care services, addressing common conditions and offering health education. Patients benefit from improved access, early detection, and treatment, leading to enhanced vision and increased awareness. Eye camps also positively impact patients' emotional well-being, foster community support, and alleviate financial burdens. At the community level, they contribute to improved access, awareness, and education, reducing visual impairment, enhancing productivity, and fostering economic empowerment. These initiatives create lasting positive changes, with sustainability ensured through partnerships with local healthcare providers. In conclusion, eye camps are integral to community-based eye health, offering temporary solutions with lasting impacts on well-being and development.

Keywords: Eye camp, eye camp organizer, patients, community

Introduction:

The concept of delivery of eye care in rural areas through 'eye camps' or 'mobile eye hospitals' has been well recognised by the national and international agencies. Particularly in a developing country like ours where permanent health delivery infrastructures in rural areas are not yet well established and where social, economical and educational factors play a major role, delivery of comprehensive eye care through 'rural eye camps' is a significant step forward in eradicating curable blindness caused by cataract. Apart from precise planning for successful 'rural eye camps', consistently good surgical quality and results—approximating the results obtained in any well equipped hospital—are essential [9-11]. Otherwise not only is the primary aim of curing blindness caused by cataract defeated, but also the age old fear of surgery in rural population precipitated. Good surgical quality is achieved with skilled and experienced surgeons, but followup of the patients operated in 'camps' is not always feasible in a country like ours. Keeping these factors in mind, a follow-up study of patients operated in one of our 'camps' was carried out and matched with a random sample of patients operated in our hospital to find out the differences in surgical quality and results, if any, between the two groups operated in different set-ups [8].

Overview of eye camp [1, 2, 3]:

An eye camp is a temporary event or program organized to provide eye care services, screenings, and treatments to a large number of individuals in a specific location. Eye camps are often held in rural or underserved areas where access to regular eye care services is limited. Here's an overview of how an eye camp typically operates:



Pic 1. Eye camp

Organization and Promotion-The organizers, which can be healthcare institutions, NGOs, or government agencies, plan and coordinate the logistics of the eye camp. They select a suitable location, set a date, and ensure the necessary **equipment, supplies, and medical personnel are available.**

The eye camp is advertised through various channels, including posters, community announcements, radio broadcasts, and word-of-mouth. The goal is to inform the target population about the event, its purpose, and the services offered.

Human resource and Logistic Support- A team of eye care professionals, including ophthalmologists, optometrists, and nurses, is assembled to provide services during the eye camp. This can involve volunteers, healthcare professionals from nearby facilities, or a combination of both.

The camp organizers set up temporary infrastructure, such as tents or makeshift clinics, to accommodate different eye care activities. They also ensure the availability and proper functioning of essential equipment, such as examination chairs, eye charts, diagnostic instruments, and surgical tools (if applicable).

Procedure of providing services-Upon arrival at the eye camp, individuals are registered and their basic information, including **demographic details and any existing eye conditions, is recorded. They may also undergo a preliminary screening or triage process to identify urgent cases or specific needs.**

Eye care professionals conduct comprehensive eye examinations, including visual acuity tests, refraction tests, intraocular pressure measurements, and examination of the anterior and posterior segments of the eye. This helps identify common eye conditions such as refractive errors, cataracts, glaucoma, or retinal abnormalities.

Based on the examination findings, appropriate treatment or interventions are provided on-site whenever possible. This may include prescribing corrective glasses, dispensing medications, performing minor surgical procedures (such as cataract surgeries), or providing referrals for further specialized care.

Health Education and Counseling- Health education sessions are conducted to raise awareness about eye health, hygiene, and prevention of eye diseases. Participants are informed about proper eye care practices, the importance of regular eye examinations, and the available treatment options for common eye conditions.

Follow-up and Referrals- For individuals requiring ongoing care or more specialized treatments, appropriate referrals are made to local eye care facilities or hospitals. Instructions are provided regarding follow-up visits, medication usage, or any necessary lifestyle modifications.

Data Recording and Evaluation- The eye camp organizers maintain records of the services provided, the number of individuals screened, diagnosed conditions, treatments administered, and referrals made. This data helps evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the eye camp and guide future planning.

Impact of eye camp on patients [4, 5]:

Eye camps have several positive impacts on patients who participate in them:



Pic 2. Impact of eye camp on patients

Access to Eye Care-Eye camps provide an opportunity for individuals who may have limited access to eye care services, particularly in rural or underserved areas. Patients who might not otherwise have access to regular eye examinations or treatments can receive comprehensive eye care services at the camp.

Early Detection and Treatment- Eye camps often include screenings and comprehensive eye examinations. This allows for the early detection of eye conditions, such as refractive errors, cataracts, glaucoma, or retinal abnormalities. Early detection enables timely treatment, which can prevent the progression of eye diseases and improve outcomes.

Vision Improvement- Many patients attending eye camps have vision problems that can be addressed with corrective measures such as eyeglasses or contact lenses. By providing accurate prescriptions and dispensing appropriate visual aids, eye camps help improve patients' vision and enhance their daily functioning, including their ability to study, work, and perform daily tasks.

Management of Eye Conditions- For patients diagnosed with more serious eye conditions, such as cataracts or glaucoma, eye camps may offer surgical interventions or medical management options. Treating these conditions can significantly improve patients' quality of life, relieve discomfort, and prevent further vision loss or complications.

Relief from Eye Symptoms- Patients experiencing eye discomfort, redness, dryness, or irritation may receive immediate relief through treatments or medications provided at the eye camp. This alleviation of symptoms can improve patients' comfort and overall well-being.



Pic 3. Management of Eye Conditions

Awareness and Education- Eye camps often include educational sessions aimed at raising awareness about eye health, prevention of eye diseases, and proper eye care practices. Patients gain knowledge about maintaining good eye health, recognizing signs of eye problems, and understanding the importance of regular eye examinations. This knowledge empowers them to take better care of their eyes and make informed decisions about seeking future eye care.

Emotional and Psychological Impact- Eye camps can have a positive emotional and psychological impact on patients. Many individuals attending eye camps have been living with untreated eye conditions, leading to visual impairment and related challenges. Receiving care and experiencing improvement in their vision can boost patients' self-esteem, confidence, and overall emotional well-being.

Community Support and Networking- Eye camps often foster a sense of community support among patients. Participants may find comfort and solace in meeting others with similar eye conditions or hearing success stories from those who have received treatment. This shared

experience can create a supportive network and reduce feelings of isolation or stigma associated with visual impairments.

Cost Savings- Eye camps often provide free or subsidized services, reducing the financial burden of eye care for patients. This is particularly beneficial for individuals who may have limited financial resources and would have otherwise been unable to afford eye examinations or treatments.

Impact of eye camp on the community [6,7]:

Eye camps have significant impacts on the community in which they are conducted:



Pic 4. Awareness and Education

Improved Access to Eye Care- Eye camps bring essential eye care services directly to the community, especially to underserved or remote areas where access to regular eye care may be limited. By eliminating geographical and financial barriers, eye camps ensure that community members have access to much-needed eye examinations, screenings, and treatments.

Increased Awareness and Education- Eye camps play a vital role in raising awareness about the importance of eye health and preventive measures within the community. Through educational sessions, materials, and interactions with healthcare professionals, community members gain knowledge about common eye conditions, risk factors, and the significance of regular eye check-ups. This awareness empowers individuals to take proactive steps in maintaining their eye health and seeking timely care.

Early Detection and Treatment- Eye camps facilitate early detection and treatment of eye conditions within the community. By providing comprehensive eye examinations and screenings, eye camps help identify individuals with vision problems, refractive errors, cataracts, glaucoma, or other eye diseases at an early stage. Timely interventions can prevent further progression of these conditions, leading to improved eye health outcomes for the community.

Reduced Visual Impairment- Eye camps contribute to the reduction of visual impairment within the community. By addressing refractive errors and providing appropriate eyeglasses or contact lenses, eye camps significantly improve the vision of community members. Furthermore, early detection and treatment of eye diseases, such as cataracts or glaucoma, can prevent irreversible vision loss and disability.

Enhanced Productivity and Quality of Life- Improved eye health resulting from eye camps directly impacts the productivity and quality of life of community members. Clear vision enables individuals to perform daily activities, pursue education, engage in productive work, and actively participate in social and community life. This, in turn, contributes to the overall development and well-being of the community.

Economic Empowerment- Eye camps can have positive economic impacts on the community. By addressing visual impairments and providing appropriate interventions, community members are better equipped to engage in educational pursuits, secure employment, and contribute to the local economy. Improved eye health leads to increased **productivity, reduced dependency on social support systems, and enhanced economic empowerment** at both individual and community levels.

Strengthened Community Cohesion- Eye camps often foster a sense of community cohesion and solidarity. The shared experience of accessing eye care services together, supporting each other, and witnessing the positive outcomes creates a sense of collective well-being and unity within the community. Eye camps encourage community members to take ownership of their eye health and promote a culture of health and well-being.

Sustainability and Long-term Impact- Eye camps can have long-term sustainable impacts on the community. By building partnerships with local healthcare providers and organizations, eye camps can help establish ongoing eye care services in the community. This ensures continued access to eye care beyond the duration of the camp, contributing to sustained improvement in the eye health of the community.

Conclusion:

Eye camps serve as a valuable means of reaching underserved populations, providing much-needed eye care services, and raising awareness about eye health. While they offer temporary solutions, they can be an important component of broader community-based eye health care initiatives.

Eye camps have a significant positive impact on patients by improving access to eye care, enabling early detection and treatment, enhancing vision, providing relief from symptoms, promoting awareness and education, boosting emotional well-being, and offering community support. These impacts contribute to improved eye health, enhanced quality of life, and increased empowerment among patients who benefit **from these programs.**

Eye camps positively impact the community by improving access to eye care, increasing awareness, facilitating early detection and treatment of eye conditions, reducing visual impairment, enhancing productivity and quality of life, promoting economic empowerment,

fostering community cohesion, and creating sustainable changes in eye health outcomes. These impacts collectively contribute to the overall well-being and development of the community.

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