

EDITORIAL

Red eye: the role of primary care



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One of the most common eye problems to present to health workers is acute red eye(s). Approximately 40% of all outpatients seen in Bawku, Ghana, and in ten district hospitals in Pakistan, present with red eyes (Figure 1).

While the more serious causes of red eye need prompt recognition and management by an eye specialist, in many cases red eye can be managed at the first point of health care (primary level). If primary health care workers are able to differentiate the various causes of red eye and provide primary level treatment, there are two important advantages:

- Patients are managed quicker and closer to where they live
- Secondary centres will be relieved of treating simple conditions, allowing more time and resources for eye conditions that need the attention of specialists.

This issue of the *Community Eye Health Journal* gives an overview of what the primary level health care worker can do for patients presenting with red eye. We have limited this to non-traumatic causes, as eye injuries will be discussed in a separate issue of the journal later this year.

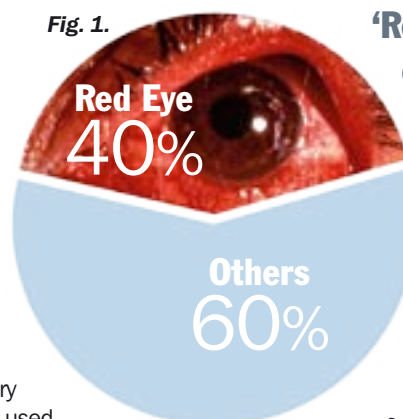
Isaac Baba's article deals with first aid at the primary level, and Tissa Senaratne and Clare Gilbert provide an overview of conjunctivitis, while Anthony Hall and Bernadetha Shilio give more information about the difficult management of allergic eye disease including practical guidelines on how to recognise and manage vernal keratoconjunctivitis. We also include useful summary diagnostic and management tables and a quiz that can be used for training primary level eye care workers.



Primary health care workers examine a baby. CAMBODIA

Sue Stevens

Fig. 1.



'Red eye is one of the most common eye problems. In 2004, approximately 40% of all outpatients seen in Bawku Hospital, Ghana, and in ten district hospitals in Pakistan, presented with red eyes'

Source: Bawku Hospital figures: Isaac Baba
Pakistan district hospitals figures: Babar Qureshi

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