

## How to make an eye clinic more accessible for people with low vision



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### Good patient flow

- The unit should be laid out in such a way that it is easy for patients to go from one part of the unit to another
- Some hospitals paint coloured lines on the floor which patients can follow. For example, a brightly coloured line may lead straight from registration to the first waiting area
- Remove obstacles that people with low vision may fall over or collide with.

### Use of colour, contrast, and lighting

- Use large, clear letters for all the signs in the department. Ensure there is good overall illumination and avoid creating glare, which could be caused by using shiny white tiles on the floor and walls. For signs, use colours with high contrast, e.g., white or yellow

lettering on a black or dark background  
Before you make any changes, make sure people with low vision can read the signs!

- In the waiting area, use brightly coloured chairs, or paint them in a contrasting colour compared to the walls and floor. This will help people with low vision to find them and see the ones that are empty
- Use tape or paint to apply a thick line to the edges of steps to make them more visible. Use ramps with a handrail instead of stairs, if possible
- White hand basins and toilets against white tiles can make bathrooms very difficult to use. Change the colour of the walls and/or floor to improve contrast
- If there are lifts, put a brightly coloured arrow or ring around the call button, or



Figure 1

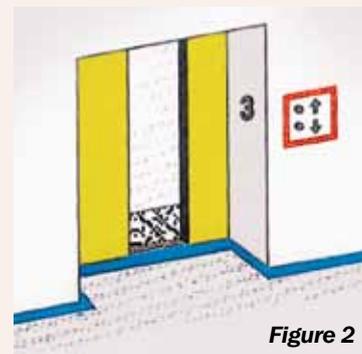


Figure 2

paint the door a different colour (Figure 2).

### Staff assisting someone with low vision

- Be patient: people with low vision may have visited many eye units or professionals already, and have told their stories many times before
- Be kind: people may initially be angry when they are told they have untreatable visual loss. Listen and be supportive, but do not give false hope.

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## Useful resources for low vision

### Low vision devices

#### Hong Kong Society for the Blind

For visual assessment charts, refraction equipment, training materials, and low vision devices. Visit [www.hksb.org.hk](http://www.hksb.org.hk)

#### ICEE Global Resource Centre

For low-cost spectacles, frames, lenses, and low vision devices. Prices for low vision aids start from US \$2.50. Contact Vivasan Pillay at [vivasan@iceeafrica.co.za](mailto:vivasan@iceeafrica.co.za) or +27 312023811.

### Internet browsing support



**LowBrowse™** is a free add-on to the Mozilla Firefox web browser, which is also free. It lets users read all text in web

pages in a special reading frame at the top of the screen. The frame presents text in a single line and users can change the size, font, colour contrast, and letter spacing without having to zoom in and out. It has a speech option which reads the text.

LowBrowse: <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/lowbrowse/> (123.5 kB)

Mozilla Firefox: [www.mozilla.org](http://www.mozilla.org) (32 MB)

### Community Eye Health Journal back issues

These back issues are available online ([www.cehjournal.org](http://www.cehjournal.org) – click on ‘Past issues’) and on the Community Eye Health Update CD which was sent out with Issue 76: Instruments and Consumables. Please let us know if you have not yet received a copy. New subscribers: an updated CD will be sent to you in 2013.

Vol. 20 No. 62, 2007. **The visually impaired child**

Vol. 17 No. 49, 2004. **Low vision care: the need to maximise visual potential**  
Vol. 16 No. 45, 2003. **Helping the blind and visually impaired**

For information on testing near vision: **Rénée du Toit. How to prescribe spectacles for presbyopia.** *Community Eye Health J* 2006;19(57): 12-13.

### Online resources for low vision

<http://bit.ly/L2Y5VS> – article on assistive technology by someone with low vision. PDF (1.6MB)

[www.lowvisiononline.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.lowvisiononline.unimelb.edu.au) – a guided learning resource for eye care workers who want to learn more about working with patients with low vision. Available in English, Chinese, and French.

[www.lighthouse.org/for-professionals/practice-management](http://www.lighthouse.org/for-professionals/practice-management) – a collection of

articles, mainly aimed at ophthalmologists.

[www.mdfoundation.com.au](http://www.mdfoundation.com.au) – practical guides (PDF format) for patients and their carers, with a focus on macular degeneration. Look in “Fact Sheets & Publications”.

[www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org) – advice on living with vision loss.

[www.svrc.vic.edu.au](http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au) – for people with low vision who are in education.

[http://www.ski.org/Colenbrander/Images/Low\\_Vision\\_Exam.pdf](http://www.ski.org/Colenbrander/Images/Low_Vision_Exam.pdf) – practical guidance on performing a low vision assessment, aimed at trained low vision practitioners.

### Low vision courses

#### Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology, Tanzania

For information, contact Genes Mng'anya, KCCO, Good Samaritan Foundation, PO Box 2254 Moshi, Tanzania. Tel: +255 27 275 3547. Email: [genes@kcco.net](mailto:genes@kcco.net) or visit [www.kcco.net](http://www.kcco.net)

**October 17–26: Training in clinical low vision care.** Basic and advanced clinical low vision care. Aimed at optometrists.  
**October 29–30: Population-based approach to establishing a low vision service**