Men are more likely to ignore eye health symptoms and miss early medical attention until disease is significant

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Credit: AI-generated image (disclaimer)

Men are 16 percent more likely to present with advanced vision loss at eye clinics compared to women, according to researchers at City, University of London.

The study, which is published in the journal of *Ophthalmic and Physiological Optics*, highlights that men are more likely to ignore symptoms and not seek early medical attention until disease is significant. This presents a public health challenge for glaucoma and other diseases that benefit from early detection.

In many diseases and medical conditions late presentation is more of a problem for men than women. In the United Kingdom, The College of Optometrists recently found that women place a higher value on sight tests and visit their community optometrist more than men. This is also the case of GP visits, as statistics show that men go half as often, on average, as women.

As risk of sight loss from glaucoma is greater in those detected with advanced disease, this presents a major issue. Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the world, according to the World Health Organization, and it is estimated that it affects 67 million people worldwide.

Often described as the 'invisible thief of sight' due to its gradual onset, glaucoma refers to group of eye diseases which result in damage to the optic nerve and vision loss. As it can it can occur without any symptoms, it is especially important that people have regular eye-tests to detect glaucoma as early as possible.

To investigate whether men are indeed more likely than women to have advanced visual field loss at referral to glaucoma clinics, the researchers analysed 152,918 visual field tests from 32,147 patients in England to see if there was a difference. Participants were included if they had measureable visual field loss in at least one eye at referral to glaucoma clinics and cases of advanced visual field loss as defined by the Enhanced Glaucoma Severity Staging method at the first visit to secondary care were used as a proxy measure for late presentation of

glaucoma.

The researchers found that the overall proportion of patients with advanced visual field loss at referral to glaucoma clinics was slightly higher in men than in women. Once relative risk was standardised for age, it was seen that a person with late presentation of glaucoma was 16% more likely to be a man than a woman.

Professor David Crabb, Professor of Statistics and Vision Research at City, University of London and lead author of the study, said:

"There's a lot of research evidence to suggest that men are more likely to put off visits to doctors and healthcare professionals. It's likely true for visiting an optometrist too. Our results add to this evidence because it suggests men are more likely to present at clinics with advanced visual field loss when they get a diagnosis of glaucoma. The effect wasn't huge but it is certainly noteworthy. As with many health conditions it is better to spot glaucoma at the earliest stage because this will greatly improve outcomes

Roshni Samra, manager of the CitySight eye clinic at City, University of London, said:

"Everyone should get their eyes regularly tested, especially as you get older. Glaucoma is one of many serious eye conditions that the optometrist is trained to detect. Therefore if you haven't had an eye test in a while please book an appointment with your local optometrist as soon as possible."

Provided by City University London

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