Preschool Vision Screening by Family Physicians

Preschool vision screening is necessary for preventing vision loss in young children. Kemper and Clark provide important data regarding preschool vision screening performed by family physicians in this issue of the *Journal of Pediatric Ophthalmology & Strabismus*.

Although family physicians are responsible for only approximately 25% of outpatient visits made by children, their impact in detecting visual impairment is significant. Kemper and Clark's response rate of 35% may not statistically represent the practice patterns of vision screening for preschool children by family physicians, but the results of the survey indicate general trends. For example, as among pediatricians, the rate of vision screening increases with patient age among family physicians.

I was surprised, and somewhat disturbed, that 3% of the family physicians actually reported visual screening was unnecessary for young children. These physicians believed family members were responsible for detecting visual problems. How are parents supposed to document amblyopia in their child if the conditions is asymptomatic? I was also surprised that most of the family physicians would not use a vision screening test that did not have a false-positive rate of 10% or less. As Kemper and Clark point out, there are no screening tests with a false-positive rate that low.

Ultimately, the results of this survey emphasize the importance of educating family physicians about vision screening for preschool children. Those surveyed reported that lack of training was a barrier to performing vision screening tests.

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