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VALIDATION OF AN INSTRUMENT FOR EVALUATION OF VISUAL STATUS IN PATIENTS WITH SEVERAL DEGREES OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

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Purpose: The use of values for health states, that can be quantified as weights for physical or mental disabilities, represent global evaluations of the health levels associated with different conditions. For the use of a common metric value, as an analogical visual scale, the morbidity associated with a disease/condition can directly be compared with that associated with an entirely different condition. For example, the disability associated with the visual impairment can be compared with hearing impairment, or other medical conditions and its corresponding negative impact. For such comparison the development of instruments becomes necessary to measure in a precise and comprehensive way the disability associated to a given health status in the patient's point of view. The purpose of this study was to apply and analyze an instrument that evaluates visual status in vignettes for adult individuals with different degrees of visual deficiency.   Methods: A group of 92 patients of Institute of Vision of UNIFESP was included according to the following criteria: age ≥25 years, informed consent, absence of cognitive deficit and previous diagnosis of an eye condition. Demographic data (age, gender, educational level) were collected by a quick interview. Binocular visual acuity was measured both for near and distance using the ETDRS chart and with the patient's optical correction (if used). Five vignettes representing different visual states were presented: 1) near normal or normal vision (^{3} 20/63) ; 2) total blindness (no luminance perception); 3) low vision (20/80-20/160) ; 4) economic blindness (20/200-20/400) and 5) social blindness (20/500-20/1000). Visual states were defined as the difficulty that the described individual in the vignette presented in its vision, being graduated from 1 (no difficulty) to 5 (extreme difficulty).   Results: Participants age ranged from 25 to 90 years (average=53±16 years), with 48 males (52%) and 44 females (48%).   Mean values of visual states was compatible with the description of the vignettes for the 5 presented visual states: normal vision (1,20±0,44); total blindness (4,68±0,46); low vision (3±0,70); economic blindness (3±0,73) and social blindness social(4±0,56). There were no correlations between the values of visual states and visual acuity, educational level, sex and age of the participants.   Conclusion: In this group of patients with several degrees of visual impairment, the vignettes of visual states were classified adequately in terms of degree of difficulty of vision. These results validate the use of these vignettes for application in studies of the negative impact of the visual impairment/blindness.