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Evaluating the effectiveness of the Macular Society Eccentric Viewing Rehabilitation Training - the evaluation study

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Background: The Macular Society have provided Eccentric Viewing (EV) training across the UK since 2006, by training volunteers to deliver a community based model. Trainers deliver free one-to-one training during 1-3, 1 hour over a 2–3 month period, usually in learners' homes. During sessions, trainers also share handy hints and tips about (e.g.) lighting, magnification, social support and technology.
Methods: An independent research team evaluated the effectiveness of the programme using a wide range of outcome measures, including reading ability; well-being; and health- and vision-related quality of life. Learners were also interviewed for their opinions.
Results: 121 learners completed all stages of the study. They perceived the trainers to be knowledgeable, well- trained and friendly. 75% of learners felt they had received helpful advice in addition to EV training; and 65% of learners felt they had achieved a positive outcome. Objective results were less encouraging. There was a borderline significant increase in "life satisfaction" for the learners, but a highly significant decrease in their "positive affect" (PANAS). There was no significant change in measured reading speed or acuity (MNRead-style test); or in health- or vision-related quality of life (EQ-5D-5L; VisQoL; NEI-VFQ-7). There was, however, an increase in the proportion of learners reporting that they could read a newspaper with "little or no difficulty" (from 13% to 23%); and a significant decrease in the number reporting "extreme difficulty" whilst watching television (from 27% to 15%).
Conclusion: The findings may be explained by some of the unique features of this programme: many learners who would seem to have limited scope for improvement still wish to undertake the training; the interval between training sessions is lengthy; and there is no link to a low vision assessment.

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