

Vision in the context of healthy ageing

Intrinsic capacity is recognized as an important determinant of healthy ageing and well-being of older adults defined as the composite of all the physical and mental capacities that an individual can use in their lifetime.⁽³⁾ There are five domains of intrinsic capacity: cognition, locomotion, sensory (including vision and hearing), vitality and psychological.⁽⁴⁾ Declines in intrinsic capacity strongly predict the risk of mortality and disability ⁽⁵⁾, and is influenced by the five domains.

Vision health is a critical component of intrinsic capacity, and instrumental to advancing healthy ageing, by enabling people to be mobile and to interact safely with their peers, family, and their environment. Vision facilitates participation in everyday life, such as working, socializing, learning, and doing things that we enjoy.⁽⁶⁾ Studies have found that visual impairment can limit the activities of older adults, which in turn result in limited independence, social isolation, loneliness, and depression.⁽⁷⁻⁹⁾ Further research has shown that vision impairment is closely related to cognitive decline and the ability to manage other health conditions.⁽¹⁰⁻¹²⁾

Older adults often face significant challenges in receiving support for low vision. These challenges include difficulties in accessing or using assistive technology, the burden of care experienced by family members and supporters, and the compounded burden of additional sensory losses, such as hearing loss. While there are many eye conditions associated with ageing, certain eye diseases may occur at birth or earlier in life. Attention is equally needed to promote healthy ageing and good health later in life for those living with low vision from an early age.

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Vision health has the potential to greatly influence the health, well-being, and quality of life of older adults, yet there is a lack of alignment amongst vision and ageing sectors and limited resources to describe the influence of vision on ageing and vice versa to support engagement of key stakeholders and subsequent education initiatives for patients and their loved ones. There is a need to create a shared narrative amongst vision and ageing sectors so that vision health may be integrated into ageing agendas and older people may be considered in vision health agendas, policy, and practice.

A large, stylized graphic of an eye is positioned in the upper half of the page. The eye is rendered in shades of grey and white, with a central white pupil and several concentric grey rings representing the iris. The eye is looking towards the right side of the page.

Expansion of Messaging on **Vision Health and Ageing**

There is a scarcity of educational resources and limited knowledge of good practice on messaging for advocates (and subsequently patients) that addresses the complexity of health topics and the factors that impact understanding and access to information on diseases, treatments, and care pathways, which inform policy, practice, and health care decision-making.

The message framework aims to support the development of a core narrative and good practice in communication tailored to advancing the vision health of older people. It is intended for civil society, patient and professional associations, advocates and thought leaders to support advancing policy and practice dialogue and may be adapted to meet the unique needs of organizations and their constituents.

1. Provide context



Provide background information on issue provided in simple terms.

Consider the audience that the information is being conveyed to and the best channel of communication.

Consider the level of health literacy of target audience.

What is the connection between ageing and vision health?

- Around the world populations are rapidly ageing. The share of the global population over 60 years of age is expected to nearly double over the next 3 decades, reaching 22% by 2050. Vision is a key consideration to ensure healthy ageing for this growing population of older people.

2. Introduce burden of disease



What is the evidence on the burden of this disease/health problem?

Use of statistics and facts can help emphasize the magnitude of the problem.

What is the burden of vision loss in older people?

- According to the Global Burden of Diseases Study, age-related losses in sensory functions, including vision and hearing, account for most of the burden of disability in older age, and contribute to declines in physical and mental health.

3. Identify gaps in **knowledge** and/or **care**



Establish the desired outcomes of identifying the gaps in knowledge.

Identify target audience who can address gaps in care and inform policies.

Consider how the communication of these gaps in knowledge/care have been successful or unsuccessful in previous initiatives.

What are the current gaps in eye care policy and practice?

- The patient journey to receiving eye care, including preventative screening, diagnosis, treatment, rehab and aids, is often riddled with systemic barriers. Referral pathways are complex, making it difficult to access to care. Policy and practice changes are needed to support the delivery of person-centred eye care.

4. Make connections to intergovernmental agendas



How does this issue relate to the strategic objectives and priorities of intergovernmental agendas or national health agendas?

Consider how addressing this gap in knowledge/care can contribute to the achievement of objectives outlined in these agendas.

Which global agendas support vision health and healthy aging?

- **Integrated People-centred Eye Care (IPEC)** is the goal of the global eye health sector. It aims to support integration of eye health across health and social services and ensure access to eye care throughout life, from prevention to treatment and rehab.
- The **UN Decade of Healthy Ageing** aims to improve the lives of older people through 4 key action areas. It provides an opportunity to enhance eye health for older people by targeting integrated care, age-friendly environments, combatting ageism, and long-term care services.

5. Develop **advocacy actions**



How do these advocacy and education actions support and align with other efforts to improve awareness of health issues and overall health outcomes?

Are these advocacy actions supported and endorsed by trusted experts from across relevant sectors and disciplines?

How can the vision and aging sectors be effectively united?

Meeting the goals of Integrated People-centred Eye Care and the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing calls for improving the lives of older people, supporting healthy ageing and improving vision health. Meeting these objectives requires the union of vision and ageing sectors towards a common agenda on enhancing vision health for all.

6. Call to **action**



Why does addressing this health issue matter and how is it important to the audience?

What is the call to action for the audience? How can they support addressing this health problem or advancing their own health? What is the clear next step?

- Promoting awareness and advancing policy dialogue on vision and ageing.
- Use these resources to ensure vision health is considered as a key part of ageing agendas and advance dialogue with key stakeholders on meeting the needs of older people in vision health policy and practice. Share these messages with your networks, colleagues, and partners.

What is the burden of vision loss in older people?

Good Practice and Solutions to Support Vision Care for Older People

Based on consultation with vision health partners, key calls to action and recommendations for improvement of policy and practice may centre on:



Promoting global agendas such as the [UN Decade of Healthy Ageing](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Age Friendly Environments](#) initiative to support stakeholders in considering vision health through the lens of healthy ageing.

Collecting and sharing evidence on the impact of vision loss and interventions with policymakers.



Tackling barriers to care, including preventative care and access to specialists to support timely and person-centred care.

Educating different types of health care providers on the challenges and care required for older people experiencing vision loss, or at-risk of vision loss (e.g., eye health and mental health providers).



Providing emotional and physical support to older people living with vision loss and their supporters, through community action (e.g. mutual care groups) and collaborative action (e.g. partnerships between ageing organizations and the low vision community).

Considering accessibility and communication preferences for older people and people living with low vision, as they may require alternative formats for education and awareness.



Message Bank

1 Around the world populations are rapidly ageing. The share of the global population over 60 years of age is expected to nearly double over the next 3 decades, reaching 22% by 2050. Vision is a key consideration to ensure healthy ageing for this growing population of older people.

Tags: Ageing eye, population ageing

2 Ageing is one of the risk factors for many eye conditions which can lead to vision impairment. While there are many eye conditions associated with ageing, certain eye diseases may occur at birth or earlier in life. Attention is equally needed to promote healthy ageing and good health later in life for those living with low vision from an early age.

Tags: Older people, vision loss

3 An estimated 73% of people living with avoidable vision impairment are older people; that is 800 million people globally. This number will increase as the population ages, reaching 1.28 billion people by 2050.

Tags: Older people, population ageing, vision loss

4 According to the Global Burden of Diseases Study, age-related losses in sensory functions, including vision and hearing, account for most of the burden of disability in older age, and contribute to declines in physical and mental health.

Tags: Older people, vision loss, ageing health

5 Vision health is a key component of intrinsic capacity and therefore healthy ageing. Intrinsic capacity is defined as a person's physical and mental capacities and includes six domains: cognition, locomotion, psychological, vitality and sensory, which includes visual capacity.

Tags: Vision health, healthy ageing, intrinsic capacity

6 Vision loss can affect the ability for older people to meet their basic needs, contribute to society, learn, grow, and make decisions, develop and maintain relationships and stay mobile.

Tags: Vision loss, healthy ageing

7 Beyond the individual, vision loss impacts economies and societies as a whole. It contributes to productivity loss, health care system burden and caregiver burden.

Tags: Older people, population ageing, vision loss

8 Older adults often face significant challenges in receiving support for low vision. These challenges include difficulties in accessing or using assistive technology, the burden of care experienced by family members and supporters, and the compounded burden of additional sensory losses, such as hearing loss.

Tags: Vision loss, population ageing

9 The patient journey to receiving eye care, including preventative screening, diagnosis, treatment, rehab and aids, is often riddled with complex pathways and barriers which impede access to care.

Tags: Healthy ageing, vision health, integrated care, person-centred care

10 Optimizing capacities and abilities toward healthy ageing calls for a narrative around vision and ageing that makes the connection across sectors and disciplines toward a common agenda on vision health.

Tags: Healthy ageing, vision health

11 Integrated People-centred Eye Care (IPEC) is the goal of the global eye health sector. It aims to support integration of eye health across health and social services and ensure access to eye care throughout life, from prevention to treatment and rehab.

Tags: Healthy ageing, vision health, integrated care, person-centred care

12 Integrated People-centred Eye Care aims to:

1. Ensure eye health is embedded across health and social services
2. Support delivery of services that consider people's needs, preferences, and values
3. Guarantee access to a continuum of eye care throughout life

Tags: Healthy ageing, vision health, integrated care, person-centred care

13 The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing aims to improve the lives of older people through 4 key action areas. It provides an opportunity to enhance eye health for older people by targeting integrated care, age-friendly environments, combatting ageism, and long-term care services.

Tags: Healthy ageing, vision health, integrated care

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