



# Lions District 410W Sight Newsletter

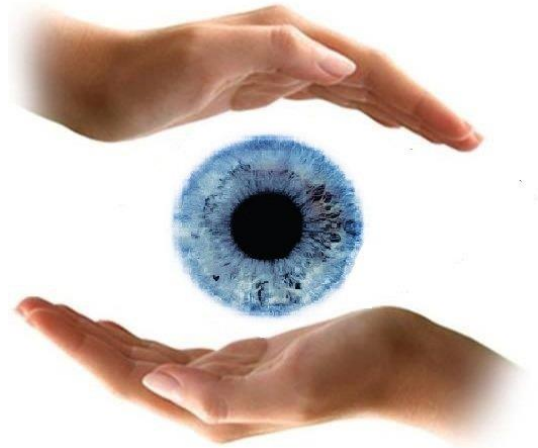
Sight or Vision is one of the pillars of Lions Service Projects alongside Hunger, Childhood Cancer, Diabetes and Environment. Ever since Helen Keller challenged the Lions Clubs of the world to “become Knights of the Blind”, Lions Clubs from all over the world have accepted her challenge and Sight remains one of the most important services in which Lions Clubs are involved in. I thought I would like to share a few thoughts on the most common eye problems encountered in patients.

The first is myopia or near-sightedness. This means that the patient has a problem with their distance vision and this is the most common eye problem in school-going children. Typically the myopia manifests itself at the age of about 8 years old. This is important because if a Lions Club intends screening primary school children, there is no point in screening Grade R or Grade 1 pupils as they are too young to show the signs of myopia. Ideally the screening should start with the Grade 2 or Grade 3 pupils. Pupils who seem to have near-sightedness need to be referred to an optometrist for further evaluation and a possible pair of spectacles.

The next problem is presbyopia or longsightedness whereby the eyes lose their ability to focus on nearby objects, resulting in difficulty reading the newspaper or a book. Presbyopia usually becomes noticeable in your early to mid-40’s and will continue to worsen until your mid-60’s. A pair of reading spectacles from your local pharmacy or a pair supplied by your optometrist is the solution to this condition.

A third common condition is the development of a cataract in one or both eyes. A cataract is the clouding of the normally clear lens of the eye. Most cataracts develop slowly and so do not affect your eyesight in the beginning, but with time will interfere with your vision. A cataract needs to be diagnosed by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist (an eye specialist). The ophthalmologist would then perform cataract surgery, which fortunately is a very safe and effective procedure.

A fourth and more serious condition involves a cornea transplant which is used to restore vision to a person with a damaged cornea. The cornea is the transparent, dome shaped surface of the eye and it is where light enters the eye. The reasons for a damaged cornea include thinning or tearing of the cornea, a corneal ulcer, Fuchs dystrophy (a hereditary condition) or a sports injury to the eye. Corneas are very difficult to obtain in South Africa and often need to be imported at a prohibitive cost of about R40,000. The cornea transplant obviously needs to be done by an experienced ophthalmic surgeon.





## October is Eye Care Awareness Month

October is eye care awareness month and I would like to encourage each Lions Club in District 410W to try and get involved in at least one vision related project this month.

Ideas include getting involved in the Lions Brightsight White Cane day, the explanation of this is in the Brightsight newsletter "On the Brighter Side", which was sent to all Clubs at the end of September. Also I would like to challenge your Club to provide at least one needy person in your community with a pair of spectacles. The gift of sight is a very special gift indeed.

One of the problems some Clubs have had with the spectacles provided by Brightsight is that the patient has no say as to the type of frame provided. In an effort to solve this problem the new script form on the website has 12 examples of frames (6 men and 6 ladies) to choose from. Hopefully any patient receiving a pair of spectacles from Lions Brightsight will now be satisfied with the frame they receive.

If your Club has collected old spectacle frames and wishes to send them to the Brightsight Office in Benoni please note the following: sort through the spectacles and if the frame is damaged or very old fashioned, please discard the frame. A rule of thumb is that if you would not wear the frame yourself, the prospective patient will probably not either. Once you have a reasonable number of frames for collection (say 30 to 40) please phone the Brightsight Office manager Kirsty MacKenzie on 011-4225577 and she will arrange for Seabourne Couriers to uplift the frames and deliver them to Brightsight.

If I can assist in any way, please feel free to phone me on 0832540437 or email me on [peterdaniel@mweb.co.za](mailto:peterdaniel@mweb.co.za)

Yours in Lions,  
Peter Daniel (DC Sight)

