

Priorities Forum Statement

Number	37
Subject	Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome (Mears-Irlen Syndrome) and Coloured Filters / Tinted Lenses
Date of decision	February 2012
Date refreshed	January 2017
Date of review	January 2018

GUIDANCE

The provision of Mears-Irlen Lenses or other Coloured Filters/ Tinted Lens for Specific Learning Disabilities is a low priority and will not be funded out of NHS resources.

Evidence

In 1983 Irlen described Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome which was said to cause visual discomfort in a subgroup of people with dyslexia.

An update from the Royal College of Ophthalmologists issued in Autumn 2002 stated that “no scientific evidence to support the existence of such a syndrome has been found. The symptoms elicited by the IDPS are vague and medically would have very little diagnostic significance. Although SSS may not exist, interest in coloured filters or overlays as a treatment for dyslexia has persisted. Much of the literature is uncontrolled or poorly planned, but some good studies have supported it”.

Searches of Medline and Cochrane showed two double-masked placebo controlled studies and a randomised controlled trial on individually prescribed coloured filters/ tinted lenses to help with reading, which indicate some possible benefits. Two review papers and a randomised prospective controlled trial on the effect of tinted lenses on reading ability did not show significant improvement in reading.

A policy statement issued by the Committee on Children with Disabilities, American Academy of Paediatrics, American Academy of Ophthalmology, and American Association for Paediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus states that “visual problems are rarely responsible for learning difficulties. No scientific evidence exists for the efficacy of eye exercises, vision therapy, or the use of special tinted lenses in the remediation of these complex paediatric neurological conditions”.

References

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The Human Rights Act has been considered in the formation of this policy statement.