BACKGROUND

> The Montreal Barriers Study seeks to examine the demographic and psychological variables associated with awareness and utilization of vision rehabilitation services.

> Thusfar, results indicate that, at best, half of people who are eligible for rehabilitation services actually receive them.

> Individuals with age-related vision loss are at an increased risk of developing depression, making this an intuitively obvious factor in seeking assistance [1,2].

> The presence of depressive symptoms has been related to one’s perceived visual functioning [3], and one’s level of social support from friends [4].

> The purpose of this investigation was to focus on depression and its relation to various characteristics of visually impaired individuals.

METHOD

Participants:

> 313 men & 394 women with an age range from 26 to 100 (median = 78)

> Recruited from Ophthalmology Departments of 4 university-affiliated hospitals

> Visual acuity in the better eye of 20/70 or worse

> Able to understand and speak either English or French

Materials:

> Semi-structured interview assessing demographic characteristics

> Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)

> Brief COPE Scale

> Visual Function Index (VF-14)

RESULTS

> Awareness and utilization of vision rehabilitation services as well as severity of vision loss are not related to a person’s experience of depressive symptoms.

> In each awareness group and at each level of severity of vision loss, 1 in 3 participants showed these symptoms.

> Correlations between the CES-D scores and VF-14 (r = -.23) and between CES-D and the Brief COPE (r = -.13) were not strong enough to indicate a notable association.

> However, a person’s living condition is strongly associated with the presence of depressive symptoms, $\chi^2 (2) = 9.58, p < .01$.

> Additionally, lack of family support is closely related to the experience of depressive symptoms, $\chi^2 (1) = 28.53, p < .001$.

CONCLUSION

> A significant number of visually impaired people are at risk for developing symptoms of depression.

> There are no obvious demographic or psychological correlates of depression in this group, although a person’s living situation and family support should be considered.

> The effectiveness of intervention on lessening symptoms of depression in the short-term has recently been shown [5,6].

> Nonetheless, of the study participants who received rehabilitation services, only 28% had been told that psychological services could be obtained at the agency.

> Clearly, much remains to be done in the provision of appropriate management of this rather frequent consequence of visual impairment.