



Low Vision Service

The Low Vision Service consists of a multidisciplinary team of providers that evaluates and provides comprehensive rehabilitation to patients of all ages with all degrees of vision loss or impairment. They evaluate and address all aspects of vision loss including loss of central (detailed) vision, loss of (restricted) peripheral vision, night blindness, loss of contrast sensitivity, glare and light sensitivity, loss of color perception and many others.

LOW VISION SERVICE TEAM AND FUNCTIONAL REHABILITATION

Director and Assistant Professor William Smith, OD, leads the team which includes Kateryna Sanders, OD, Ariel Wong, OD, occupational therapist and UPMC Rehabilitation Institute Low Vision Team Leader Holly Stants, MS, OTR/L, SCLV, CLVT, and Laura Troxell, MOT, OTR/L, to assess patients' functional visual ability and help them adapt to daily life. The Low Vision Service utilizes a Life Skills Apartment and Mobility/Sensory Garden to translate the recommended treatment plan into functional training activities.

ADVANCING RESEARCH IN FUNCTIONAL VISION LOSS AND REHABILITATION

Research regarding functional vision loss, vision rehabilitation, and vision restoration occurs in the state-of-the-art facility known as StreetLab, led by Rakié Cham, PhD, and José-Alain Sahel, MD, Chair of the Department of Ophthalmology. The StreetLab's mission is to study individuals with vision loss to gain a better understanding of visual behaviors and mobility to enable better treatment/rehabilitation strategies for the overall improvement in independence and quality of life for people with low vision. A multidisciplinary team assesses patients' needs and perception of their impairments.

The Low Vision Service also has active research with respect to driving. An immersive driving simulator is used to evaluate and assess vision and driving by providing feedback to the participants and evaluator. The Low Vision Service is certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Motor Vehicles to evaluate and fit bioptic spectacle mounted telescopes for patients with vision loss that qualify.

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TRAINING AND RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS

Residents participating in the program gain hands-on experience working with a diverse patient population and collaborate closely with the multidisciplinary team, including optometrists, occupational therapists, and rehabilitation specialists. Through direct involvement in clinical evaluations, functional rehabilitation, and research initiatives, residents become proficient in developing personalized care plans and utilizing innovative resources such as the Life Skills Apartment, Mobility/Sensory Garden, and interactive driving simulator. This immersive training not only fosters clinical expertise but also encourages residents to contribute to ongoing advancements in low vision research and patient-centered care, preparing them to make a meaningful impact in the field upon completion of the program. ■



The Low Vision Service at the UPMC Vision Institute provides a comprehensive approach to vision rehabilitation by utilizing innovative resources such as a driving simulator, StreetLab, Sensory Garden, and the Life Skills Apartment.

For details, visit ophthalmology.pitt.edu

