

Are Blind People More Likely to Accept Free cataract Surgery? A Study of Vision-related Quality of Life and Visual Acuity in Kenya

Briesen, Sebastian; Roberts, Helen; Ilako, Dunera; Karimurio, J; Courtright, Paul

Abstract:

Purpose: To determine possible differences in visual acuity, socio-demographic factors and vision-related Quality of Life (QoL) between people accepting and people refusing sponsored cataract surgery. **Methods:** Three hundred and fifty seven local residents with visually impairing cataract, presenting at screening sites in Kwale District, Kenya were clinically assessed and interviewed. The World Health Organization (WHO) QoL-questionnaire WHO/Prevention of Blindness and Deafness Visual Functioning Questionnaire 20 (PBD-VFQ20) was used to determine the vision-related QoL. A standardized questionnaire asked for socio-demographic data and prior cataract surgery in one eye. After interview, patients were offered free surgery. Primary outcome was the mean QoL-score between acceptors and non-acceptors. Secondary outcomes were visual acuity and socio-demographic factors and their contribution to QoL-scores and the decision on acceptance or refusal. **Results:** Fifty nine people (16.5%) refused and 298 accepted cataract surgery. Vision-related QoL was poorer in people accepting than in those refusing (mean score 51.54 and 43.12 respectively). People with poor visual acuity were only slightly more likely to accept surgery than people with better vision; the strongest predictors of acceptance were the QoL-score and gender. Men were twice as likely to accept compared to women. Of people who accepted surgery, 73.8% had best eye vision of 20/200 or better. **Conclusion:** In this population, visual acuity was of limited use to predict a person's decision to accept or refuse cataract surgery. QoL-scores provide further insight into which individuals will agree to surgery and it might be useful to adapt the QoL-questions for field use. Gender inequities remain a matter of concern with men being more likely to get sight-restoring surgery