



## Service Priorities and Programmes Electronic Presentations

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### **Vision screening for underprivileged schoolchildren in Hong Kong**

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#### **Introduction**

Uncorrected refractive error remains undoubtedly an important health issue for schoolchildren. Early detection and correction of eye problems are necessary in order to minimize barriers to effective learning. In Hong Kong, general vision screenings of school children are provided by the Department of Health and non-governmental organizations to the community. However, a follow through comprehensive eye examination is a health expense. Families must bear an out-of-pocket cost in order to receive optometric treatment in the private sector.

#### **Objectives**

The aim of this project was to provide a vision screening program to students attending an inner-city primary school. Underprivileged schoolchildren with detected visual problems were financed by donations with a follow-up comprehensive eye examination and optical treatment if needed.

#### **Methodology**

Students from a primary school in Sham Shui Po district were invited to participate in an on-site vision screening. Personal health histories, visual acuities, non-cycloplegic auto-refraction, colour vision, stereopsis, binocular and ocular health status were determined. Those who required further follow-up were offered free referrals to The Optometry Clinic at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University for a comprehensive eye examination and follow-up treatment.

#### **Result**

A total of 157 students (ages = 6-13 years) participated in the vision screening with 28% of children who needed referrals for follow-up diagnosis and treatment. Overall, 23% of the participants failed the visual acuity test, 4% were found to have binocular deficits while 1% showed various ocular health abnormalities. For those schoolchildren who showed deficits in visual acuities, an averaged 4-line improvement was noted after subjective correction. There is a high incidence of correctable visual deficits in this segment of schoolchildren from impoverished families. If these deficits are left untreated, poor vision will definitely hinder students'

academic performance and participation in other activities. An early comprehensive eye examination is warranted in order to improve this discrepancy in accessing eye and vision care.