
Editor's Page

The *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (JVIB)* is delighted to offer a special supplement in its centennial year on the topic of visual impairment and public health. We were especially pleased to have received support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which offered financial assistance and expertise on content, for the publication of this special supplement to *JVIB*.

My introduction to visual impairment as a public health issue occurred in 1979. At that time, I was working in a low vision clinic that was housed in a center for persons who are blind. We served primarily clients who were referred by the rehabilitation counselors of the state, essentially people with low vision who were connected to the blindness system. When the center closed suddenly and we moved the entire clinic to a college of optometry and an eye institute, the nature of the population we served changed dramatically. The patients (no longer clients) were primarily elderly and had recently lost their vision from age-related macular degeneration, diabetes, and glaucoma, to name a few conditions. These patients were not, nor did they see a need

to be, part of the blindness system. They wanted health care, with a preference for sight restoration and, if the restoration of their sight was not possible, then rehabilitation for specific visual needs. I believe that this experience describes what happens when professionals in the blindness system transition to the health care system. We serve an entirely different segment of the population simply by being involved with institutions that provide health care.

Since the majority of the population of persons who are visually impaired are elderly and have low vision, I acknowledge that they can be served in a timely and effective way in the health care system. With this special supplement of *JVIB*, we are pleased to serve as a platform for your consideration of this topic. Corinne Kirchner, the editor of this supplement, provides, through her Guest Editor's Page, a full description of the challenges and opportunities that the contributors discuss. I know that you will find the articles that follow to be stimulating and hope they will form the beginning of an emerging body of literature on this important topic and help propel the topic of visual impairment and public health to the center of the health and public policy agenda.

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The *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness* (ISSN: 0145-482X) is published monthly by AFB Press, American Foundation for the Blind, 11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300, New York, NY 10001; individual subscriptions, \$140 per year; institutional subscriptions, \$195 per year. Periodicals postage paid at New York, New York, and at additional post offices.

AFB
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POSTMASTER: Send address changes and subscription orders to AFB Press Customer Service, P.O. Box 1020, Sewickley, PA 15143-1020.

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