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Strategies to address inequity of uncorrected refractive error in the Western Pacific: A modified Delphi process

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Source OPTHALMIC AND PHYSIOLOGICAL OPTICS
Volume: 44 Issue: 6 Page: 1148-1161
DOI: 10.1111/opo.13348

Published SEP 2024

Early Access JUN 2024

Indexed 2024-06-22

Document Type Article

Abstract PurposeUncorrected refractive error is the leading cause of vision impairment globally; however, little attention has been given to equity and access to services. This study aimed to identify and prioritise: (1) strategies to address inequity of access to refractive error services and (2) population groups to target with these strategies in five sub-regions within the Western Pacific.MethodsWe invited eye care professionals to complete a two-round online prioritisation process. In round 1, panellists nominated population groups least able to access refractive error services, and strategies to improve access. Responses were summarised and presented in round 2, where panellists ranked the groups (by extent of difficulty and size) and strategies (in terms of reach, acceptability, sustainability, feasibility and equity). Groups and strategies were scored according to their rank within each sub-region.ResultsSeventy five people from 17 countries completed both rounds (55% women). Regional differences were evident. Indigenous peoples were a priority group for improving access in Australasia and Southeast Asia, while East Asia identified refugees and Oceania identified rural/remote people. Across the five sub-regions, reducing out-of-pocket costs was a commonly prioritised strategy for refraction and spectacles. Australasia prioritised improving cultural safety, East Asia prioritised strengthening school eye health programmes and Oceania and Southeast Asia prioritised outreach to rural areas.ConclusionThese results provide policy-makers, researchers and funders with a starting point for context-specific actions to improve access to refractive error services, particularly among underserved population groups who may be left behind in existing private sector-dominated models of care.

Keywords **Author Keywords:** access; equity; financial protection; refraction; refractive error; spectacles
Keywords Plus: EYE CARE; EQUITY; HEALTH; IMPACT; MYOPIA

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Web of Science Categories

Ophthalmology

Language

English

Accession Number

WOS:001247873300001

PubMed ID

38881170

ISSN

0275-5408

eISSN

1475-1313

IDS Number

C3F00

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