

# Prevalence of cognitive impairment, depression, and anxiety symptoms among older adults with glaucoma

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**PURPOSE:** Two factors which may disrupt the ability to adhere to the treatment for glaucoma are cognitive impairment and mental health complications. Poor adherence to treatment may lead to preventable vision loss. Past research in this area has been limited by little focus on older patients with glaucoma, and the use of brief measures of cognition that may not detect subtle deficits related to Alzheimer disease.

**PATIENTS AND METHODS:** This study examined the prevalence of cognitive impairment, depression, and anxiety in a sample of 41 glaucoma patients at a tertiary care glaucoma clinic. They had a mean age of 70.0 years (SD=9.2 y; range: 51 to 86 y) and 70% (n=30) were female. Two cognitive measures commonly used in detecting dementia were used to measure cognitive functioning.

**RESULTS:** Controlling for age, memory impairment was found in approximately 20% of the sample, and impaired executive functioning was found in approximately 22% of the sample. Forty-four percent of the sample scored in the impaired range on one or more measures. Mild-to-moderate depressive symptoms were found in 12.2% of participants, and 1 person reported clinically significant anxiety.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The results from this study indicate that cognitive impairment may be common in older patients with glaucoma. This has implications for treatment adherence, as difficulties in remembering information may significantly impede the ability to follow instructions from a physician. It is imperative that physicians and caregivers are aware of the prevalence of such conditions, as they are among the first to interact with such individuals. Given the high prevalence of cognitive impairment and depressive symptoms, future research should examine the impact of such factors on glaucoma treatment adherence.

J Glaucoma. 2012 Apr;21(4) :250-4.

PMID: 21336151 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21336151>