Background

The Vision Therapy department at Southern College of Optometry; along with other departments such as contact lens, low vision, ocular disease, primary care, and pediatrics; provides tens of thousands of patients with vision care each year. Vision therapy is staffed by nine doctors (7 FCVDs) who work with residents, 3rd and 4th year students in providing approximately 1,150 visual therapy evaluations and 3,500 vision therapy sessions every year.

Methods

The charts of all (n=105) evaluations scheduled in the vision therapy service between December 1, 2012 and January 31, 2013 were examined. The following data points were recorded from each chart: age, referring department and treatment recommendation(s).

Results

Referral rates based on department and outside referrals were as follows: Pediatrics–61%, Adult Primary Care–13%, Stroke/TBI (Rehabilitation facility/referrals)–12%, Ocular Disease–6%, Tennessee’s Well Child Program–<1%, outside/self referral–8% and unknown–<1%. Over 51% of patients were 6-10 years of age and 15% were 11-15 years of age. Other age groups were as follows: 2-5 years–4%, 16-20 years–8%, 21-29 years–2%, ≥ 30 years–20%. Based on examinations completed, in office vision therapy was recommended to 48% of patients and not recommended to 15.0%. Other recommended treatments included patching therapy–3%, a visual perceptual exam–5%, home vision therapy–4%, a perceptual exam and vision therapy–3%, a request for a psycho-education evaluation and course of action to be determined at follow up exam–20%.

Discussion

Evaluation of the referral data and the distribution of patient ages showed that the pediatrics department referred more often than any other department at SCO. However, compared to data collected by the same means in 2009, there was an 11% increase in the amount of referrals involving stroke/TBI patients as well as a 3% increase in patients seen between the ages of 16-20. An ongoing goal of the vision therapy department has been to better educate its colleagues as well as a 3% increase in patients seen between the ages of 16-20. An ongoing goal of the vision therapy department has been to better educate its colleagues and ensure its message is transferred to all faculty, staff and students.

In the past, partially due to the high number of referrals from the pediatrics department, the age ranges with the highest percentage of examinations received the best care optometry can provide. This report will hopefully give the doctors within the vision therapy department the statistics they need in order to educate their colleagues in the ways in which vision therapy can help patients, regardless of age or etiology. It can be concluded that the doctors within Southern College of Optometry’s vision therapy department are able to assess the best course of action, even if that course does not include some form of vision therapy.

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Prescribed Course of Action 2013

- In-Office VT needed
- Patching Therapy
- Visual Perceptual Exam
- No in-office VT needed

Prescribed Course of Action 2009

- In-Office VT needed
- Patching Therapy
- Visual Perceptual Exam
- No in-office VT needed

The most important piece of data acquired from studying the prescribed courses of action is the 15% of patients that were not prescribed vision therapy. This data validates that 85% of the doctor recommended referrals were accurate and reliable as the patients required either therapy or further evaluation. It can be concluded that the doctors within Southern College of Optometry’s vision therapy department are able to assess the best course of action, even if that course does not include some form of vision therapy.

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