Background

InfantSEE is a public health program to promote infant eye and vision care. This program is offered in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The InfantSEE program offers one comprehensive infant eye assessment between 6 to 12 months of age at no cost. InfantSEE was developed to address the need for increased eye and vision awareness, early intervention, effective care, and healthy vision.

Visual problems can play a critical role in a person’s ability to function. During childhood, visual disorders are the most prevalent handicap, and they rank as the fourth most common disability in the United States. While these disorders can cause severe consequences, they can be prevented. Only approximately 50% of children between 6 to 10 years old have received a comprehensive eye exam during the past year. That number drops to 44% for children under the age of 5. Many parents feel that the vision screening by a pediatrician or primary care physician is sufficient, but this may result in conditions being identified later than they would by a comprehensive eye examination. Because of this, the AAP and the American Academy of Family Physicians has encouraged eye exams for all children. The InfantSEE program seeks to provide eye and vision care to all infants, regardless of parental income or insurance.

During the first months of life, the visual system is rapidly developing. There are changes in visual acuity, accommodation, and binocularity. Any potential problem during this rapid phase of development can cause the potential for serious problems later in life. Unilateral visual experiences are known to cause abnormal visual development.3 In a clinical setting, infants may have significant refractive error, amblyopia, strabismus, or ocular health.

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Methods

The purpose of the study was to assess Michigan pediatricians’ awareness of the InfantSEE program. From this source, there were offices and/or clinics located in 349 cities, of the entire practice. Pediatricians may not be the one opening the mail in their office, and an office staff member or an individual in a lower management position, in this case an office manager or receptionist.11 Additionally, if the pediatrician moved, or no longer being at that address. This created a total of 509 possible surveys that could be distributed.

A total of 520 different pediatrician locations were targeted with the mailing; however, 95 valid responses were received because 6 invalid addresses were removed. The response rate for the mail surveys was 33%.2 In order for the child to clearly see an object, he has to be able to accurately accommodate to it, fixate on it, and track it with the eyes. Only approximately 50% of children between 6 to 10 years old have received a comprehensive eye exam during the past year. That number drops to 44% for children under the age of 5. Many parents feel that the vision screening by a pediatrician or primary care physician is sufficient, but this may result in conditions being identified later than they would by a comprehensive eye examination. Because of this, the AAP and the American Academy of Family Physicians has encouraged eye exams for all children. The InfantSEE program seeks to provide eye and vision care to all infants, regardless of parental income or insurance.

Discussion

The InfantSEE program offers a free comprehensive eye and vision assessment to infants 6 to 12 months old, yet this program is not well known among pediatricians in Michigan. Further outreach efforts are needed to increase the awareness of this program, in hopes of having more parents taking their infants for a comprehensive assessment.

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