

1 **Investigating the positive impact of the visual arts on patients**
2 **with ophthalmic conditions**

3

4 Authors: Neda Minakaran MA MRCP FRCOphth¹, Talha Soorma², John Bladen BSc
5 FRCOphth³, Mariya Moosajee PhD FRCOphth^{3,4}

6

7 ¹ Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, London, UK

8 ² Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, London, UK

9 ³ Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Trust, London, UK

10 ⁴UCL Institute of Ophthalmology, London, UK

11

12 Institution work was conducted:

13 Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK

14

15 Conflict of Interest: Nil

16

17 Corresponding author:

18 Dr Neda Minakaran

19 Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

20 The Western Eye Hospital

21 Marylebone Road

22 London

23 NW1 5QH

24 UK

25 Tel: +44 7966 041270

26 Fax: +44 203 312 3259

27 Email: neda.minakaran@gmail.com

28

28

29 **Sir**

30

31 The recent Keeler Lecture, 'Vision, eye disease, and art', delivered by MF Marmor
32 (1) highlights the complexities of vision and art. It is not an uncommon belief
33 that sight-impaired individuals are unable to appreciate art. Whilst a 2004
34 review for the Arts Council England cited almost 400 papers demonstrating the
35 positive impact of art in healthcare (2), there is no published literature on the
36 role of visual art in the ophthalmology setting.

37

38 To address this an art and photography exhibition was held at Moorfields Eye
39 Hospital, London, UK. Patients, staff and visitors, both sighted and sight-
40 impaired, were invited to respond to a pre-validated questionnaire asking
41 agreement on a 5-point Likert scale to statements about art appreciation and
42 display in the healthcare setting.

43

44 There were 102 respondents: 39% male, 61% female; mean age 50.7 years
45 (range 17-90); 65% were patients and those accompanying them, 28% staff;
46 54% had an ophthalmic condition, 51% of these bilateral.

47

48 An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that display
49 of visual art in the hospital improves patient experience (92%), relaxes patients
50 (91%), makes clinic waiting times more bearable (85%) and improves staff
51 morale (70%). For the first two statements, agreement was stronger amongst
52 staff and visitors than patients (Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA, $p=0.007$ and $p=0.016$),

53 and amongst those without an eye condition versus those with (Mann Whitney
54 U; $p=0.006$ and $p=0.02$). The display of tactile art was thought to be beneficial
55 for the visually-impaired patient experience by 86% of respondents.

56

57 Of those with an ophthalmic condition, 77% agreed/strongly agreed that they
58 enjoyed visual art and 75% could express themselves through art-creation
59 similarly to before visual problems developed, with no difference between those
60 with unilateral versus bilateral disease (Mann Whitney U; $p=0.107$ and $p=0.129$).

61

62 Our results demonstrate strong opinion that visual art positively enhances
63 patient and staff experience in ophthalmology, and proves that those with visual
64 impairment are able to enjoy and create art. There is a suggestion that
65 displaying tactile art may make a more significant improvement to the visually
66 impaired patient experience. Future exhibitions showcasing tactile art could
67 investigate this further.

68

68

69 **References**

70

71 1. Marmor MF. Vision, eye disease, and art: 2015 Keeler Lecture. *Eye* 2016; 30:

72 287-303

73

74 2. Staricoff R. Arts in health: a review of the medical literature. *Arts Council*

75 *England* 2004. Available at: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk>