Vision-enhancing interventions in nursing home residents and their short-term effect on physical and cognitive function.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES: To evaluate the effect of vision-enhancing interventions (cataract surgery or refractive error correction) on physical function and cognitive status in nursing home residents.

DESIGN: Longitudinal cohort study.

SETTING: Seventeen nursing homes in Birmingham, Alabama.

PARTICIPANTS: A total of 187 English-speaking adults aged 55 and older.

INTERVENTION: Participants took part in one of two vision-enhancing interventions: cataract surgery or refractive error correction. Each group was compared against a control group (persons eligible for but who declined cataract surgery or who received delayed correction of refractive error).

MEASUREMENTS: Physical function (ability to perform activities of daily living and mobility) was assessed using a series of self-report and certified nursing assistant ratings at baseline and at 2 months for the refractive error correction group and at 4 months for the cataract surgery group. The Mini Mental State Examination was also administered.

RESULTS: No significant differences existed within or between groups from baseline to follow-up on any of the measures of physical function. Mental status scores significantly declined from baseline to follow-up for the immediate (P=.05)
and delayed (P<.02) refractive error correction groups and for the cataract surgery control group (P=.05).

**CONCLUSION:** Vision-enhancing interventions did not lead to short-term improvements in physical functioning or cognitive status in this sample of elderly nursing home residents.