



Burden of cataract in developing countries

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Dear Friends
Season's Greetings !!

Cataract are the leading cause of reversible visual loss worldwide, responsible for 47.8% of blindness accounting for 17.7 million blind.^{1,2} The prevalence and demographics of cataract related blindness differ in developed and developing countries. In developed countries, cataract accounts for only 5% of the blindness while in developing countries 50-90% of the blindness is due to cataract.^{3,4} High prevalence of blindness is due to rapidly growing aging population. More than 80% of blindness is found in the age group of 50 years and above.⁵ In India, 7.4% - 15.3% of childhood blindness is due to cataract.⁶

In our country result of national survey showed that number of people affected with cataract will reach 8.25 million by 2020.⁷ In India 3.8 million people develop blinding cataract every year while only 2.7 million cataract surgeries are done every year resulting into huge backlog of cataract.⁸ Patients who waited for more than 6 months for cataract surgery usually have loss of vision and a reduced quality of life. The major consequences of waiting for cataract surgery is fall related injuries and depression. Increasing backlog of cataract is real challenge in the way to achieve the goals for VISION 2020. WHO has focused to increase the availability of cataract surgery in order to decrease the incidence of vision loss by year 2020. WHO predicts that 32 million cataract surgery will be required in 2020 according to current surgical trends.

Visual impairment from cataract weighs a heavier economic burden in under developed and developing countries. It has been reported that cataract causes a loss of 4.4 billion US\$ to India annually.⁹ Postoperative refractive error is one of the major cause of blindness and visual impairment. Manual small incision cataract surgery is the most cost -effective intervention, is relatively safe and easy to learn, does not require special costly instruments. The overall cost, that is provider costs plus direct and indirect cost to patient were calculated per surgery was US\$ 29.4 for MSICS, US\$ 36.1 for ECCS and US\$ 37.92 for phacoemulsification. MSICS is a surgery of choice for talking huge backlog of cataract in developing countries.⁹

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