



The Overbrook School for the Blind (OSB) and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) are working closely to develop a potential collaboration to address the needs of a growing population of children with diagnosed or suspected Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI), sometimes referred to as Central or Cortical Visual Impairment. CVI is now the leading cause of visual impairment in developed nations, accounting for 30-40% of visual impairment diagnoses.

CVI

Unlike ocular or eye-related issues, CVI is a visual impairment resulting from brain-based damage to the visual pathway. The impairment occurs when part of the brain is adversely affected due to trauma or a medical event/condition, thus preventing the brain's complex visual system from functioning properly. To date, there is no medical cure or surgical intervention to treat CVI. However, with a correct assessment and appropriate interventions by highly trained CVI educational specialists, a CVI-diagnosed child can gain or retain a significant amount of functional vision.

OSB and CHOP

The goal of a potential collaboration between CHOP and OSB is to create synergies between clinical and educational resources for children diagnosed with CVI and explore potential research opportunities to further advance the field.

CVI specialist Beth Ramella, Ed.D, a teacher of students with visual impairments for over 25 years, is leading this work at OSB. Widely considered one of the most experienced and effective assessors of CVI in the country, Ramella has developed specific teaching strategies for children with CVI. She and her team work closely with parents, teachers, and ophthalmologists to develop customized interventions for each child.

OSB has already converted several classrooms specifically for children with CVI. All OSB students have been assessed for CVI, and customized interventions have been implemented. Additionally, OSB has begun assessing non-OSB students, and OSB educational staff and therapists have been receiving ongoing CVI education.

OSB and CHOP are currently exploring specialty areas in which they can work together to help improve the lives and outcomes of children with and suspected to have CVI. Some CHOP patients today receive CVI assessments from OSB. Towards the goal of improving outcomes for children with CVI, CHOP Ophthalmology staff have begun receiving CVI training from Beth Ramella and others.



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Future

The idea of a partnership is for each child to receive individualized interventions as quickly as possible after CVI diagnosis to achieve maximum functional vision. There is no question that the number of children diagnosed with CVI will continue to grow as more medical professionals obtain the specialized training to diagnose CVI. The unparalleled combination of CHOP's medical expertise and research capabilities, coupled with OSB's long history of innovation and expertise in assessing and addressing CVI, is likely to attract local families of children with CVI as well as similar families from other parts of the country and the world – with each family seeking the best possible care for their child.

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