



Vision Rehabilitation comes to GHEI

December marked the launch of a new Low Vision program at Gavin Herbert Eye Institute with the appointment of **Dr. Rebecca Kammer, OD, PhD**, as chief of vision rehabilitation services. The availability of low vision experts for those with advanced AMD is critical.



In the US, legal blindness is defined as 20/200, and your doctor may not think about the need for vision rehabilitation services until significant vision loss is apparent. In truth, a referral to a low vision specialist much earlier in the course of your disease may result in increased independence and improved quality of life. **You need not have vision worse than 20/200 to benefit from a low vision program.**

Individuals living with vision loss as a result of AMD often suffer from depression. Researchers find that the level of depression is not linked to actual vision, but to what the patient experiences as the personal impact of the vision loss. Based on your needs and your concerns, working with a low vision optometrist or ophthalmologist may help improve your best vision obtainable and reduce the frustration that accompanies AMD.

Vision rehabilitation begins with an evaluation and assessment. The doctor may ask you what are important goals for you – it is to continue to read, to participate in a hobby that requires viewing fine detail, or is it living



independently? The low vision expert may arrange a home visit or suggest enrolling in classes that offer daily living tips. Assistive technology like magnifiers, computers, or special lights may also be recommended to help you achieve your goals.

After hip surgery, your orthopedic surgeon arranges for physical therapists to help you in your recovery but still manages your medical care. **Likewise, a vision rehabilitation specialist offers training and advice, but does not take the place of your ophthalmologist.** A referral to a low vision specialist does not mean your eye doctor has ‘given up’ on your treatment or even believes that your vision loss is irreversible.

Medicare and commercial insurers generally cover low vision services that have been prescribed by your physician and are designed to improve your ability to function. If you believe you would benefit from the services of a low vision specialist, mention this to your doctor at your next visit and discuss local options. In many cities, vision rehabilitation programs may be offered through schools or nonprofit organizations. Your State’s senior services or services for the blind may be helpful in locating these services.