



Introducing Health Sciences: Visual Impairment

A Day on the Good Health Train

Train announcement

Open your windows and see nature at its best

It is a beautiful morning...

Dr Lillian Cingo

I know it's not going to be easy being your first day but we're here to support you.

Commentary

People have been arriving since before dawn, many are nervous, but they come in hope and wearing their best clothes.

Everyone is asked about their health problems and their blood pressure is taken.

Then they go off to the eye, dental, healthcare and psychology clinics. Nowhere is the need for basic primary healthcare more obvious than at the eye clinic. Fifty percent of the black population over 65 has chronic visual impairment. Much of the disability causes could have been prevented with earlier treatment or education.

Chat

Children in these communities often suffer eye injuries and many are disadvantaged by untreated conditions affecting their sight. Toboa has very severe myopia. He's 16 years old and this is the first time he's had his eyes tested.

Chat

Man

What is amazing in the rural areas is that so many of them, because they have not had either the opportunity or affordability to attend an optometrist, they have been going through their schooling with tremendously high myopia. The teachers are very aware of it because of their poor standards at school, but when the train comes round it's their first chance to actually have their eyes examined.

Woman

You can only see that sign without the glasses... and you're going to eventually to see that sign so it is quite an improvement but it's not a hundred percent.

Commentary

Toboa's glasses cost thirty rand, about three pounds. This was paid by his grandmother from her pension. The lenses aren't full strength yet as the change to his vision would be too disorientating. By the end of the first day the optometry students have seen over two hundred people and have listened to many histories.

Woman

You know you would be so used to ...oh you've got a cataract or an opacity in your eye, or you've got high pressure so you need to go to an ophthalmologist, you can't just say it to these people.

Woman

There's one woman told me she had an operation, and I asked her do you know what type of operation it was, and she said no, and what had actually happened is the ophthalmologist did a cataract extraction, he took out her lens in her eye so she couldn't focus on anything, she couldn't see. When we put on those very thickglasses and she was just amazed the doctor didn't tell her what type of operation he was performing on her and that her vision would become blurry afterwards.