

SPELD Victoria Fact Sheet: Coloured Lenses Interventions and Dyslexia: Do they work?

Released Monday 25th August 2014

Issue:

There is some confusion in the community between visual fixation issues and dyslexia. It is important to differentiate between these conditions and identify which conditions effect an individual in order to identify which interventions will be effective.

What is dyslexia?

[The SPELD Vic website has a detailed definition of dyslexia and other specific learning disorders.](#)

While there are many definitions of dyslexia the working definition used by Sir Jim Rose in the landmark [Rose Review](#) of 2009 is useful for its clarity. It says:

- *Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.*
- *Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.*
- *Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities*
- *It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category and there are no clear cut-off points.*
- *Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organization but these are not by themselves markers of dyslexia.*
- *A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well founded intervention.*

Can coloured lenses fix dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a lifelong neurological condition. There is no known 'cure' for dyslexia.

Some organisations are focused on improving visual fixation which they may describe as "visual dyslexia", Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome or Irlen Syndrome. Coloured lenses, coloured paper are often prescribed and anecdotal feedback is that this helps for some people improve their ability to discern words.

SPELD Victoria cannot comment on the efficacy of this treatment but wishes to clarify that condition being treated is not dyslexia; it is a visual impairment condition, albeit that may co-occur with dyslexia. This syndrome, if it exists, is less common than diagnosable Specific Learning Disorders.

Macquarie University Special Education Centre recommends against the use of coloured lenses for the treatment of dyslexia noting that:

“In a joint statement, The American Academy of Ophthalmology, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus and American Association of Certified Orthoptists firmly repudiated the use of lenses, stating that there was no scientific evidence supporting their use. The expense of such treatment is unwarranted and may divert resources from evidence-based reading interventions.” [Briefing #22](#) MUSEC, 2010

Where can I find reliable evidenced based information on this issue?

Macquarie University Special Education Centre has published 40 evidence based, plain English briefings on learning difficulties. These briefings include recommendations and links to references. This excellent resource is available on their website:

http://www.musec.mq.edu.au/community_outreach/musec_briefings

In both relevant briefings they do not recommend lenses for people with dyslexia. MUSEC briefings recommend explicit instruction in the specific areas causing difficulty.

MUSEC Briefing #33 Behavioural Optometry: Not Recommended

<http://www.musec.mq.edu.au/public/download.jsp?id=6378>

MUSEC Briefing #22 Irlen Lenses: Not Recommended

<http://www.musec.mq.edu.au/public/download.jsp?id=6378>

Where can and when can I speak to an expert?

SPELD Victoria provides a free and confidential infoline service staffed by professional practitioners. Please contact us with your question and we will call you within three days to discuss.

Phone: 180005 1533

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