Vision Impairment and Health Risks

Vision impairment (VI) is associated with falls, which occur frequently among older adults and often cause long-term disabilities. In 2013, the direct medical costs nationally of falls among persons aged over 65 years were $34 billion.

Factors associated with falls include contrast sensitivity and poor balance, as well as poor visual acuity. Additional reasons include multiple chronic conditions, gait problems, lower extremity muscle weakness, and the use of multiple medications, some of which might exacerbate these problems.

In Nebraska

- 46% of Nebraskans with vision impairment have experienced one or more falls in the last year
- 46% of Nebraskans with vision impairment have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs
- 59% of Nebraskans with vision impairment have "any health problem that requires use of special equipment such as a cane, wheelchair, special bed or special telephone."

Beyond the physical health risks posed by visual impairment, there are also emotional and mental, as well as economic and access problems that accompany impairment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limited in any way in any activities because of physical, mental or emotional problems</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>No VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed getting needed medical care due to lack of transportation</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed to see a doctor in past 12 months but did not due to costs</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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Self Reported Data from 2014 CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Cited Resources