

FRECUENCIA DE LA MIOPIA MONOCULAR

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This is going to be a short talk this morning. I would like to make my main contribution in the section of the treatment of myopia for later on in the program, on Friday. But during the work which I have been doing on the treatment of unilateral myopia over the last four or five years, a few points in relation to the frequency have come to my notice, and these I thought might be of some interest to you. I decided to stick, during this program, to unilateral myopia throughout, as I am sure there will be many delegates who will be talking about the bilateral form.

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It is very difficult to get figures, even on the frequency of bilateral myopia; but I was not able to find any satisfactory figures in the textbooks, even in the monumental textbooks of Sir Stewart Duke-Elder from my country, on the frequency of unilateral myopia. So I will tell you what I have found in my own clinic, and that is that approximately one out of every 600 patients who have attended have had unilateral myopia of a substantial degree.

I do not pretend that this is necessarily true throughout the whole population, but it still is quite a large number. And if we assume even that there are not half as many in the general population, it means that in Great Britain alone there are some 50,000 patients who have got unilateral myopia, and when one realizes that of those 50,000, 80 percent are seriously amblyopic, it does present a much larger problem than is often thought. It is an aspect of myopia which I think has been very much neglected. It is nearly always a congenital phenomenon, and the condition is not noticed immediately, and by the time it is, amblyopia has occurred.

Among those 600 the distribution has been rather curious; and this is the point which I did not know. In England today we have a large number of immigrants from the West Indies. But, nevertheless, in the area which is served by the main hospital at which I attend, only about one quarter of percent of the total population are in fact, West Indians. But to my surprise, I find that nearly 40 percent of the cases of unilateral myopia which have been sufficiently severe to require serious treatment, have been among West Indians. So it does appear that it is very common; while the bilateral form in England among this particular race appears to be rather rare. I do not know whether professor François will be able to tell us anything about this problem, because presumably, it is a genetic one, but I have certainly noticed it.

The main point that I want to leave with you in this very short preliminary observation, is that the problem is not a small one. In a country of 60 million people we have this large number of probably 40,000 people whose sight is going to be permanently and seriously impaired if nothing is done. And as we will see later, in some of the observations I am going to make, the type of amblyopia which one gets in unilateral myopia seems to be particularly intractable. This has been noticed by several observers, and certainly even contact lenses and other forms of treatment are not very satisfactory. Thank you very much.