

'Working together across London for people with a visual impairment'

LVIF E-Bulletin: 8 October 2019

Please send articles for inclusion to: lvif@londonvision.org

NB: The views and opinions expressed in this bulletin are those of the contributors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the LVIF or its members.

2019 meeting dates are:
Friday 13th December

Introduction

Welcome to the latest edition of the bulletin. This is my first edition, so I hope I have done it justice! Enjoy the issue.

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MEDICAL RESEARCH

Article 1: Moorfields researchers write first systematic review of AI in medical diagnostics

Researchers at Moorfields Eye Hospital, alongside researchers at other institutions, have produced the first systematic review and meta-analysis on

using artificial intelligence (AI) in medical diagnostics. The review, which was published in Lancet Digital Health, suggested that AI can detect diseases from medical images with similar levels of accuracy as health-care professionals.

Despite their conclusion that AI has comparable diagnostic powers to health-care professionals, the study authors stressed that there was only a small amount of data available for inclusion in the study. They reviewed over 20,000 articles but less than 1% of these were robust enough to be included in the analysis while also comparing the performance of AI and health professionals using the same test sample. More robust data from a larger number of studies may be needed to accurately show how effective AI is at making a diagnosis compared to clinicians.

© Source: Moorfields
26 September 2019

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Article 2: Parathlete Zac Shaw has pledged his support to national sight loss charity

Zac is supporting the charity to help raise awareness of macular disease – the biggest cause of sight loss in the UK and highlight the importance of funding research to find a cure.

The 23-year-old first started noticing problems with his vision at the age of nine. He was struggling to see the board at school and was no longer able to read without holding the book close to his face.

It took a series of tests and a number of visits to different specialists, but at just 13 he was told he had Stargardt's disease – a rare inherited form of macular disease.

"I remember getting out of the hospital, and just bursting in to tears with my mum and it was a lot to take on at such a young age," he said.

"The only information I took in was, 'You have a condition, it's called Stargardt's disease, there's no cure for it and there's no treatment'."

After the news had sunk in Zac said he has always tried to remain positive about it – an attitude which has led to his successful athletics career.

Zac, who now sprints in the T12 disability classification, made his international debut for Great Britain in 2015 for the IPC Athletics World Championships, where he finished sixth in both the 100 metres and 200 metres.

He has since gone on to compete at multiple World, and European championships.

Talking about how his condition has affected him, he said: “I never really let it get to me, because my mum always used to say to me, ‘There’s always someone worse off than you.’”

“So, although it’s hard to hear, because you feel sorry for yourself, I needed to hear it, because there is always someone worse off than you.

“I’d always go in with a mind-set that it is what it is. If I’m sad about it, it’s not actually going to change anything.”

He added: “My motivation to start running was just to make a positive out of having a disability. I wanted to be able to look at having a disability, and say, “I’m glad I have a disability, because of this.”

“And, if I didn’t have a visual impairment, I don’t think I’d be doing the sport.”

The announcement of his patronage fell in National Eye Health Week and Zac is keen to raise awareness of the importance of regular eye tests. He also works closely with Vision Express to promote good eye health.

He said: “I was lucky enough that I was brought up with a good mentality to go for regular eye tests, so it did help me.

“People go to the dentist every six months so there’s no reason why you shouldn’t go to an optician.”

Zac remains hopeful that in the future there will be a cure for Stargardt disease and all other types of macular disease.

He said: “The ultimate aim has to be to stop this cruel condition. But if you can find it early, and get treatment so that person doesn’t have to go

through the physical and emotional distress of having this condition that will be absolutely incredible.”

<https://www.visionuk.org.uk/macular-society-visually-impaired-sprinter-announced-as-patron-of-national-charity/>

© Source: The Macular Society 26 September 2019

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Article 3: **Using artificial intelligence for automatic choroidal segmentation**

Australian researchers have applied deep learning to OCT scans in order to automatically define the boundaries of the choroid and the retina. Scientists at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) have used artificial intelligence technology to automatically define the boundaries of the choroid. For their work, published in Nature Scientific Reports, researchers collected optical coherence tomography (OCT) chorio-retinal eye scans from an 18-month study of 101 children with good vision. These images were used to train an algorithm to recognise choroid boundaries. The performance of the algorithm was then compared to standard image analysis methods, with the researchers highlighting that the algorithm was more reliable and accurate. QUT senior research fellow, Dr David Alonso-Caneiro, shared: “We feel our methods could provide a way to better map and monitor changes in choroid tissue, and potentially diagnose eye diseases earlier.”

© Optometry Today, Selina Powell, 1 October

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Article 4: **"Uncorrected, defective eyesight" a factor in 196 UK road accidents**

The latest road accident statistics from the Department for Transport reveal that 1784 people died on UK roads in 2018, while 160,597 people were injured in road accidents over the year. The number of fatalities is similar to the annual total that has been recorded in each year since 2012, while the number of accidents causing injury has dropped by 6% since 2017. "Uncorrected, defective eyesight" was recorded as a contributory factor in 196 accidents in the UK, including three fatal accidents, 53 serious

accidents and 140 slight accidents. The previous year, poor vision contributed to 200 accidents on UK roads. The most common contributory factors to fatal road accidents were failing to look properly (a factor in 383 fatal collisions), driving in a careless or reckless manner (252), failing to judge another vehicle's path or speed (198) and exceeding the speed limit (177). The AOP has campaigned for drivers to undergo regular vision checks as part of licensing requirements. It's Don't swerve at sight test campaign received 159 broadcast hits and reached 111 million listeners in 2017.

© Optometry Today, Selina Powell, 1 October

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TECHNOLOGY

Article 1: **How technology can help people with sight loss live independently**

Over the next few weeks up to 24 million television viewers will see how technology can benefit the lives of people with sight loss, thanks to Amazon's new multi-million-pound TV campaign.

The e-commerce and tech giant launched its campaign, which is supported by RNIB, with a TV ad showing how Alexa, its Versatile Digital Assistant (VDA), can help people complete their morning routine, by checking the time and the weather

In the ad – titled Morning ritual - a woman, who the viewer eventually realises is blind, wakes up, makes herself coffee and prepares to head outside. She asks Alexa for the time and a description of the weather. The ad also features a guide dog, a life-changing service provided by the charity Guide Dogs in the UK.

According to Amazon, the ad was designed to show some of the Alexa features its customers with sight loss have told it are helpful on a daily basis. These range from adding items to shopping lists, asking it to set timers for cooking, and listening to podcasts, audiobooks and music. RNIB has supported the campaign as Amazon offers training support for RNIB staff on the latest Amazon devices and Alexa features that may benefit blind and partially sighted people. RNIB's Technology for Life team provides essential information to help people with sight loss to be independent, access information, grasp opportunities and be creative.

Robin Spinks, Senior Technology and Innovation Relationships Manager at RNIB, said: "The simplest jobs, that sighted people might take for granted, can often be the hardest for those living with sight loss. Having a device that can give you information via voice simplifies tasks and opens a world of accessibility."

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STUDIES AND SURVEYS

Article 1: **Your chance to influence future occupational therapy research**

If you have used occupational therapy or care for someone who does, the Royal College of Occupational Therapy (RCOT) wants to hear from you. The RCOT wants to identify the top 10 research priorities for occupational therapy in the UK and you can get involved via their short survey at www.rcot.co.uk/researchpriorities

For more information including copies of the easy read version of their survey please contact Ruth Unstead-Joss by email ruth.unstead-joss@rcot.co.uk or phone Ruth on 0203 141 4695.

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CHARITIES AND CAMPAIGNS

Article 1: **DWP partners with charity to train Job Centre staff to support users with sight loss**

Job Centre staff are to receive new training on how to help people with sight loss find jobs, through a partnership between the Department for Work and Pensions and the Royal National Institute of Blind People, which will also see some Job entrées fitted with virtual-reality headsets. Beginning this week, all Job Centre Plus staff will be given access to the online training, via a portal with information and advice on how to better support jobseekers with sight loss. The training, which is being launched to coincide with National Eye Health Week from 23 to 29 September, aims to help staff to understand sight loss and how it affects the lives of the benefit recipients they work with. It includes modules covering topics such as the causes of

sight loss; barriers facing people who are visually impaired; and tips on how to guide someone with sight loss. It will also give advice on how best to support people to navigate Universal Credit claims. Virtual reality headsets designed by the RNIB to enable staff to experience what it feels like to have sight loss will also be installed at some centres. At the moment, Job Centre users with sight loss are offered adjustments to services including longer appointments, help completing forms, and home visits where needed, DWP said. RNIB's policy manager, Chrissie Pepper, said the sight-loss awareness training would be a "a first step towards tackling the difficulties that some blind and partially sighted people face when accessing benefits". "We hope this training will lead to a better understanding from DWP and its staff about sight loss and the impact it has, leading to cases being resolved more quickly so that people can access their benefits," she said. "We look forward to building on this by providing more in-depth training to key DWP staff, such as disability employment advisors, to secure further improvements to DWP's services for blind and partially sighted people."

© Civil Service World, Beckie Smith, 25 September

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Article 2: **Disabled journalist bids to break new ground in parliament**

A disabled Reuters journalist and Labour activist hopes to become what he believes would be the first MP with such a significant level of impairment to be elected to the House of Commons. Peter Apps, a global affairs commentator with Reuters news agency, is hoping to be selected in – traditionally – one of Labour's safest seats at the next general election. He was speaking to Disability News Service at this week's Labour party conference in Brighton. Apps is one of up to 18 candidates fighting to be selected as the prospective parliamentary candidate for Vauxhall, in south London, a seat being vacated by Kate Hoey at the next general election. But if he is selected he would likely have to provide the funding himself for the support he would need while campaigning. This is because of the government's refusal to reinstate the Access to Elected Office Fund (AEOF), which was frozen by the government in 2015 after just three years and had provided funding for expenses such as BSL interpreters, assistive technology, personal assistants and taxi fares for disabled people seeking election to parliament. The EnAble fund, a partial and temporary replacement for AEOF, is only open to those seeking local elected office in England and is not open to would-be MPs. Apps would be able to pay for his own support because of a legal settlement, but he knows that many

others with his significant level of impairment would not be able to do that. It is one of the reasons he is determined to secure a seat in parliament. Apps is a former war reporter, who became paralysed in 2006 after breaking his neck while covering the civil war in Sri Lanka when he was just 25. He has regained limited movement in one arm but lacks movement in his hands. He believes, if selected to fight a seat for Labour, that he would be the candidate with the most significant level of impairment to contest a parliamentary seat for a major political party.

© Disability News Service, John Pring, 26 September

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OTHER NEWS

Article 1: **Have you claimed your TV Licensing blind concession?**

Qualify for a 50% blind concession

A blind concession TV Licence costs £77.25 for colour and £26 for a black and white TV Licence. To apply, you will need to complete an application form and post it, and a photocopy of **one** of the following documents, to TV Licensing:

- A copy of the certificate or document issued by or on behalf of your local authority
- A copy of the certificate from your ophthalmologist

You will not need to provide this information again when you renew your TV Licence.

To find out more, and apply for a 50% blind concession licence, please visit tvlicensing.co.uk/blind. You can also get information on the concession in Braille, large print or audio format by calling TV Licensing on 0300 790 6076.

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Article 2: **The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard scheme**

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard scheme is an initiative designed to act as a discreet sign that somebody has a hidden disability and requires

additional assistance while out in public. Supermarkets Tesco and Sainsbury's have started using the **lanyards**.

The scheme was developed by designers, Tabbers Limited, alongside the OCS Group UK, who provide support services to UK airports. It was first launched in 2016 at Gatwick Airport, in which more than 10,000 lanyards have been collected to date.

Now in 2019, it is being successfully introduced to several major UK airports, supermarkets, railway stations and sports venues.

Sainsbury's has been the first supermarket to trial the scheme with 40 stores. Tesco is also trialling the scheme in 15 Hertfordshire stores.

In addition, they are beginning to be recognised at international airports, cinemas, shopping centres and several NHS Trusts.

Which hidden disabilities eligible for a sunflower lanyard?

The types of hidden disabilities that are eligible for a sunflower lanyard include:

- autism and Asperger's
- learning disabilities
- dementia
- mobility issues (e.g. arthritis, MS, ME, chronic illness)
- visual or hearing impairments.

How does the sunflower lanyard work for people with hidden disabilities?

If you're wearing a lanyard, staff can offer you help but won't know what your individual disability and needs are. Just let them know what they can do.

The support that can be provided with a lanyard includes:

- more time at the checkout
- packing your bags
- speaking face-to-face to allow lip reading
- using clear and easy-to-understand language
- help with hard-to-reach products

- making others aware a person may be struggling or have behavioural issues.

How to get a sunflower lanyard for people with hidden disabilities

Simply pick one up in a participating store, airport, station or venue at a customer service desk or at checkout. The lanyards are free, available to keep and you don't need to provide proof of your disability.

Alternatively, you can also purchase one at The Hidden Disabilities Store for 66p plus postage.

More information can be found at:

<https://disabilityhorizons.com/2019/08/the-hidden-disabilities-sunflower-lanyard-scheme-that-is-helping-people-with-hidden-disabilities/>

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Article 3: Why most of the internet is closed off to blind people

As our everyday world moves increasingly online, the digital landscape presents new challenges for ensuring accessibility for the blind. A recent court challenge against Domino's pizza may be a watershed case guiding the rights of disabled people on the internet, writes James Jeffrey.

Each swipe 17-year-old Maysie Gonzales makes on her smart phone is accompanied by what sounds like the famous Stephen Hawking voice barking out orders at a relentless pace.

Screen readers translate on-screen information into speech or Braille. They have broken open the internet for people who are blind or visually impaired, and for those with other disabilities.

"Sometimes it can be horrible, it depends on how the website has been set up," says Ms Gonzales.

If a website's digital infrastructure hasn't been correctly labelled, a blind person can be met with a barrage of "button! - button! - button!" or "link 1,752! - link 1,752! - link 1,752!" from that hyperactive mechanical-sounding voice.

Hence the case Guillermo Robles, who is blind, brought against Domino's Pizza after he was unable to use his screen reader to use the company's website and mobile app.

A federal court agreed with him, and now Domino's has petitioned the Supreme Court to hear Robles' case, in what could prove a landmark battle over the rights of disabled people on the internet.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-49694453>

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EVENTS

1: **Blind & VI Tennis**

Date: 10th October 2019

Time: 10.00 am - 12.00 noon

Cost: £4.30

Contact: Andrew.jeffery@gll.org or call 02086416611

Venue: Sutton sports village, Rose Hill, Sutton, SM1 3HH

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2: **Baluji Shrivastav OBE performing at the Bloomsbury Festival**

Date: Thursday 17th October 2019

Time: 8pm

Location: Holy Cross Church, Kings Cross, Cromer St, WC1H 8JU

Booking: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/event-ticketing/booking?ev=18268>

Please email ticketing@ucl.ac.uk or call 0203 108 1000 if you have special access requirements

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3: **Royal Academy of Music Museum**

Date: Thursday 10 October 2019

Time: 14:00

Ticket price: Free

This World Sight Day discover some of the highlights of the Royal Academy of Music Museum's collections in this audio-described tour. Experience the shapes and textures of their handling collection and listen to talented Royal Academy of Music students demonstrating some of the historical instruments.

Booking contact number 02078737300; email: museum@ram.ac.uk
Venue: Royal Academy of Music Museum & Library,

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4: Living with Sight Loss

Moorfields Eye Hospital & RNIB are running a **free** 2 day 'Living with Sight Loss' workshop

When: 18 and 19 October 2019 (10:00am – 3pm)

Where: Moorfields Eye Hospital, 15 Ebenezer Street, London, N1 7NP

This free 2-day program offers peer support for people with sight loss, their friends, family, and anyone affected by visual impairment.

The course is interactive with lots of opportunities to share experiences with others who understand the frustrations of visual impairment.

Topics include:

- Getting out and about
- Practical skills for everyday life
- Meeting new people
- Using technology
- Making the most of leisure time
- Emotional wellbeing

To book a free place or for further information

Call Marie Kehoe 020 7391 3274 or email marie.kehoe@rnib.org.uk

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5: Barnet borough sight impaired group quiz

Saturday 2nd November 2019

6.45 pm for prompt 7.00 pm start

£15.00 includes a cold buffet supper, nibbles and a soft drink.
(Cash bar for alcoholic and other drinks)

Woodside Park Club
Southover
N12 7JG

- Come by yourself or with friends and family. 8 will make up a table.
- Delicious Buffet
- Raffle with exciting prizes
- Support a Charity run by and for Visually Impaired People
- Prizes for the winning team – and the team that comes last!

BBSI is a self-help and campaign group for people with partial or severe loss of sight.

To join us on the night for this fundraising event please contact –

Sunethra Tel: 020 8343 3450
Email sasg@btinternet.com

or Lis Tel: 020 8349 4705
Email: lis.vandyk@sky.com

To ensure your place, book and pay early to avoid disappointment.

If you are unable to attend, a donation or gift for the raffle table would be most welcome. Thank you!

Woodside Park Club, Southover
N12 7JG
(free car parking available)

Buses 326 and 221 runs nearby.
Nearest Tube Station: Woodside Park

BARNET BOROUGH SIGHT IMPAIRED

(Registered Charity No. 1174797)

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6: **CBS Awareness Day**

Saturday 16th November is CBS Awareness Day and, this year, Esme's Umbrella is marking it with a Patient Information event in London at UCL. This is the Eventbrite invitation to the free event -

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/charles-bonnet-syndrome-patient-information-day-registration-73799423061>

It is so important to fill the room with people who live with CBS. Please spread the word.

I am also asking charities and groups to think about CBS around that time and bake umbrella-shaped 'Biscuits for Bonnet', which will be eaten at a 'Chat for Charles'. This is not only to raise a few pounds for my researchers, but to establish firmly the CBS community in the UK.

For donations, please log on to

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/EsmesUmbrella

Recipe for Bonnet Biscuits can be found on Esme's Umbrella's website

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Supporting blind and partially sighted people who live, work and study in London

End of Bulletin