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Effectiveness of Neuro-Vision Therapy in the Management of Amblyopia: A Comprehensive Review

Article History:

Name of Author:
Tridip Puzari[1], Surabhi Suman Kalita[2], Haziel Rynjah[3*], Semim Sultana[4], Kishor Kumar Choudhury[5], Laishram Nirmala Chanu[6]

Affiliation: [1]Assistant Professor, Department of Optometry, Royal Global University, Assam, India
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Optometry, Sri Sankaradeva Nethralaya, Assam, India
[3*]Assistant Professor, Department of Optometry, Royal Global University, Assam, India
[4]B. Optom Student, Department of Optometry, Sri Sankaradeva Nethralaya, Assam, India
[5]Assistant Professor, Department of Optometry, Sri Sankaradeva Nethralaya, Assam, India
[6]M. Optom Student, Department of Optometry, Sri Sankaradeva Nethralaya, Assam, India

Corresponding Author:
Haziel Rynjah

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Abstract

This review aims to evaluate the effectiveness of neuro-vision therapy in improving visual and binocular outcomes in amblyopic patients across different age groups. Amblyopia, commonly referred to as 'lazy eye,' is a neurodevelopmental condition marked by diminished visual clarity in one or both eyes, which cannot be explained by any structural defects. Traditional treatments such as patching and atropine penalization have long been the gold standard, yet emerging neuro-vision therapies that use neural plasticity offer promising alternatives or complements. This review synthesizes evidence from 20 authentic studies published between 2010 and 2025, focusing on the efficacy of neuro-vision therapy encompassing perceptual learning, dichoptic training, and binocular approaches in amblyopic patients across age groups. Findings suggest significant improvements in visual acuity, stereopsis, and binocular function, challenging the idea of a strict critical period and highlighting the potential of neuroplasticity-based interventions

Keywords: Amblyopia, neuro vision therapy, perceptual learning, visual cortex, binocular vision therapy, neuroplasticity

INTRODUCTION

Amblyopia impacts around 2-5% of the world's population, which makes it one of the most common reasons for monocular vision loss in children and adults. (1) It arises from abnormal visual experience during early development, often due to strabismus, anisometropia or deprivation, leading to cortical suppression of the amblyopic eye. (2) Conventional therapies like occlusion of the fellow eye aim to enhance monocular function but often fail to address binocular deficits or achieve full recovery, particularly in older patients. (3)

Neuro-vision therapy, rooted in the principles of neural plasticity, seeks to rewire visual processing through targeted stimulation, offering a paradigm shift in amblyopia management It is a non-invasive, perceptual learning-based digital therapy designed to enhance neural processing in the visual cortex through a series of adaptive contrast sensitivity training sessions. (4) This review evaluates the effectiveness of these therapies, drawing on recent clinical trials and observational studies.

METHODS

Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across electronic databases including PubMed, Google

Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science for studies published between 2010 and 2025. The search strategy used combinations of the following keywords: "amblyopia," "neuro-vision therapy," "perceptual learning," "dichoptic training," "binocular therapy," "visual acuity," and "neuroplasticity." Boolean operators (AND, OR) were applied to refine the search.

Inclusion criteria comprised peer-reviewed randomized controlled trials, cohort studies, observational studies, and systematic reviews evaluating neuro-vision therapy in amblyopic patients of any age group. Studies reporting quantitative outcomes such as visual acuity, stereoacuity, contrast sensitivity, or binocular function were included.

Exclusion criteria included non-English publications, case reports, conference abstracts without full text, animal studies, and studies lacking measurable clinical outcomes. Duplicate articles were removed, and titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Full-text articles meeting the criteria were assessed for methodological quality before inclusion in the review.

Study Selection Process

The database search initially identified a total of 312 articles. After removing 78 duplicates, 234 articles remained for title and abstract screening. Of these, 162 studies were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria. The full texts of 72 articles were assessed for eligibility, resulting in the exclusion of 52 studies due to insufficient outcome data, non-relevance to neuro-vision therapy, or inappropriate study design. Finally, 20 studies were included in this review.

Prisma flow diagram data

Records identified through database searching	312
Duplicates removed	78
Records screened	234
Records excluded	162
Full-text articles assessed	72
Full-text articles excluded	52
Studies included in review	20

MECHANISMS OF NEURO-VISION THERAPY

Neuro-vision therapy encompasses several approaches; each uses neuroplasticity to enhance visual function. These approaches target the visual cortex, where amblyopic deficits originate, enhancing neural connectivity and reducing suppression

Perceptual Learning: Perceptual learning (PL) involves repetitive practice of visual task (e.g., Gabor patch discrimination) to improve VA and contrast sensitivity by stimulating specific visual pathways. [3]

Dichoptic Training: Presents distinct visual stimuli to each eye to reduce interocular suppression and promote binocular integration, often using anaglyphic glasses or VR headsets.[4]

Binocular Therapy: Engages both eyes in tasks requiring binocular fusion, such as 3D games or movies, to enhance stereopsis and VA. [5]

EFFICACY IN CHILDREN

EFFICACY ACROSS AMBLYOPIA TYPES

Amblyopia etiology influences treatment outcomes. Neuro-vision therapy tends to work effectively for anisometropic amblyopia, probably because the patient has milder binocular suppression. A 2020 systematic review by Hernandez-Rodriguez et al. found consistent VA improvements in anisometropic cases with dichoptic and perceptual learning protocols. Strabismic amblyopia, however, is more resistant, as cortical misalignment complicates binocular integration. Bilateral amblyopia, often caused by high refractive errors or cataracts, benefits from binocular therapy but requires prolonged treatment. [5,12]

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Despite promising results, neuro-vision therapy faces several challenges:

- Compliance: Holmes et al. (2016) reported a 22% compliance rate with home-based dichoptic therapy, underscoring the need for engaging formats. [7,13]
- Heterogeneity in Protocols: Lack of standardized protocols complicates comparisons. [9,14]
- Variable Outcomes: Efficacy depends on age, amblyopia severity, and compliance. Older patients and those with strabismic amblyopia show slower progress. [15]
- Regression: VA gains may regress without maintenance therapy.[2,15]
- Limited Long-Term Data: Most studies report outcomes up to 1 year, with few, confirming 2-year durability. [14]
- Cost and Accessibility: VR and computerized therapies require equipment, posing barriers in low-resource settings. [10,16]

DISCUSSION

Neuro-vision therapy offers a promising alternative to traditional amblyopia treatments by addressing the binocular dysfunction at the core of the condition. The therapy's reliance on neuroplasticity aligns with recent findings that plasticity extends into adulthood; challenging the notion that amblyopia is untreatable past the critical period. [11,17]

Compared to patching, neuro-vision therapy offers better compliance and psychosocial outcomes, especially with gamified interventions. Age remains a critical factor. Children benefit most due to peak plasticity, but adults show meaningful gains with

intensive protocols, particularly VR-based interventions. Amblyopia type also influences outcomes, with anisometropic cases responding better than strabismic or bilateral cases, likely due to less severe cortical suppression. [12,18]

The variability in protocols underscores the need for standardization. Future research should focus on optimizing treatment duration, intensity, and delivery methods. Long-term RCTs with larger sample sizes are needed to confirm durability and cost-effectiveness, particularly for digital therapeutics like VR and iPad-based games. Additionally, integrating neuro-vision therapy into public health screening programs could enhance early intervention, reducing the global burden of amblyopia. [2.19]

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Follow-up studies are needed to assess whether the improvements in visual acuity are sustained over time.
- Personalized approaches based on genetic, environmental, or neurobiological factors should be further explored. This could lead to more effective, tailored treatment plans. [20]
- Emerging trends include transcranial electrical stimulation (tES) to enhance PL effects. [13,21]
- Integration with telemedicine could improve access. [22]

CONCLUSION

Neuro-vision therapy represents a transformative approach to amblyopia treatment, harnessing plasticity to improve VA, binocular vision, and quality of life across ages. While traditional methods remain effective, neuro-vision therapies offer superior binocular outcomes and potential in treatment-resistant cases. Continued research into optimizing protocols, enhancing compliance, and reducing costs will solidify their role in clinical practice.

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