Impact of tactile features on sensory cues of visually impaired patients at National Eye Hospital, Sri Lanka

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Abstract—A visually impaired person's eyesight cannot be corrected to normal levels. They heavily rely on their other senses more than the visual sense to understand their surroundings. Tactile features cater to the haptic cues of a visually impaired person through helping with tactile navigation & way finding, safety & hazard awareness, independence & self-awareness, communication & information access & spatial orientation & memory. This study is conducted to explore the sensory cues of visually impaired patients & how they can be catered using different tactile features, materials, lighting & colours. Also, the existing tactile features are identified along with the influence tactile features have on visually impaired patients at the National Eye Hospital Sri Lanka. A mix method (qualitative & quantitative) study is carried out through a comprehensive literature review, observational study & questionnaire surveys. The Outpatient Department of the National Eye Hospital is chosen for the study as it's the tertiary care centre for the visually impaired patients in Sri Lanka. Visually impaired patients & staff members from the General Ophthalmology Clinics were chosen for the study. This study clearly shows that the existing tactile features are not sufficient for the visually impaired patients. Overall, most of the staff members think that implementing tactile features will be beneficial for the patients while almost 50% of the patients agreed with them. Finally, this research clearly depicts the importance of implementing tactile features in the Outpatient Department of the National Eye Hospital.

Keywords—Tactile features, sensory cues, visually impaired patients, National Eye Hospital, Sri Lanka