Visual, musculoskeletal and balance symptoms in people with visual impairments

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The visual system constitutes a key role when it comes to provide information from our environments. Consequently, visual impairments have profound impact on our lives. Visual impairment is one leading cause of disability worldwide. As an optometrist at a low vision clinic, I meet individuals with visual deficits regularly and they require visual correction or solutions that can bridge the gap between their visual deficits and their visual goals. It is however not unusual that individuals with visual impairments also express specific neck/shoulder area symptoms and reduced balance control. Since these symptoms are commonly associated with our natural aging process and most individuals with visual impairments are of older age (with a sparse prevalence in younger ages), these symptoms seldom associate with visual decline or deficit. However, these symptoms could very likely originate from associated poor or limited vision. The knowledge and prevalence of these specific symptoms are generally limited and hence rather limited.

This thesis describes visual, musculoskeletal and balance symptoms in individuals with visual impairments at different ages in order to explore their associations with burden of visual deficit or decline. This thesis has however not unusual that individuals with visual impairments also express specific neck/shoulder area symptoms and reduced balance control. Since the results from this thesis identify an increased risk for these specific symptoms in individuals with continuous need for visual correction and enhancing aids...