**Guide dogs Victoria's Perceptions April 2019:**   
**a newsletter for professionals working with people with vision loss**

# **Spotlight on Orthoptists**



This issue of Perceptions focuses on Orthoptists and how they can make a difference to someone's life. Our client summed it up when she said: “Everyone has been telling me what I couldn’t see, couldn’t do anymore. GDV have shown me what I can still see and do.” We hope you find her story as interesting as we do.   
   
As always, we have some great events coming up, which we would love to see you at.    
  
Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or would like to discuss something further. We can be contacted at:

Website: www.guidedogsvictoria.com.au  
Email: info@guidedogsvictoria.com.au  
Phone: 1800 804 805

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**Dates for the Diary**

**Referrer Information Sessions:** Free information sessions with morning or afternoon tea covering the services provided by GDV. Come and meet some of our practitioners, have a look at some technology Dog and see if we can offer you something new to help your patients and clients. No bookings necessary. Further info 1800 804 805.

* Friday, 24th May, Darebin RSL, 402 Bell Street, Preston,1:30 – 3:30

**Acquired Brain Injury and Low Vision – A Workshop for Professionals**: run regularly by Guide Dogs Victoria. 2019 Sessions:

* 27th June 2019
* 31st October 2019

All on campus at GDV, from 1 to 3pm  
   
For further information or to express your interest email info@guidedogsvictoria.com.au or call 1800 804 805.  
   
  
On Saturday 27th April, GDV will be exhibiting at **Diabetes Expo 2019** held at the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Expo.  
   
People with diabetes are at a great risk of developing permanent eye conditions such as Diabetic Retinopathy and are at greater risk of developing Glaucoma, Cataract and Macular Edema.  
   
On average one in three people with diabetes will develop some form of diabetic eye disease and an estimated total of 700,000 over the next 20 years.  
   
Guide Dogs Victoria has a wide range of services such as Orientation & Mobility, Occupational Therapy, Orthoptics and Assistive Technology to assist people with vision loss to achieve independence and safety

**Low Vision Orthoptist Assessments:** available for any patient or client with a diagnosed vision condition, that is uncorrectable with glasses. They will receive a functional vision assessment, explanation of the visual condition and some strategies for maximising use of vision, plus access to an ongoing program if they require. GDV is registered with NDIS to provide Orthoptic assessment and Assistive Technology recommendations. We provide Orthoptic Services throughout Victoria.

We offer various programs to people experiencing vision loss from information sessions through individual programs, peer support and group programs. You can refer any of your patients to explore these programs, by advising them to email [info@guidedogsvictoria.com.au](mailto:info@guidedogsvictoria.com.au ) or call 1800 804 805.

**Client Story: How an Orthoptist Can Change a Life**

Cara\*, had been leading a busy life as a nurse and mother to a 3-year-old daughter, when she was diagnosed with diffuse retinal vasculitis in both eyes causing a sudden and profound vision loss. Her world was turned upside down over night.  
   
She was referred to Guide Dogs Victoria to support her on her new journey. We worked with Cara to use her remaining vision and other senses to regain independence  
   
The team at GDV, sat down with Cara to work out exactly what she wanted to achieve and developed a tailored and holistic program to ensure these goals were met. Cara received OT, O&M services in addition to working extensively with the Orthorptic team.   
   
Cara’s OT & O&M program included:  
   
OT: cooking, changing her daughter’s nappy, make up application,  
O&M: independent travel on public transport and on foot in her local community and to some appointments further afield.  
Assistive Technology Training to use the accessibility options on her Mac Book.

   
Cara, really wanted to be able to read bedtime stories to her daughter again and to see her face. Something she thought would not be possible. She worked with our Orthoptic team to achieve this.  
   
Cara was dedicated to the task and worked with our expert trialling equipment. Optical and electronic magnifiers were deemed unsuccessful as they interfered with the bedtime reading experience.  Her daughter was very distracted by the aid and wanted to play with it rather than listen to the story.  
   
The team then trialled Eccentric Viewing (EV) with Cara. A method that involves identifying an area of the retina that retains reasonable functionality and then teaching the person to use this area as effectively as possible. In clients with central vision loss in both eyes, eccentric viewing (EV) training may be a helpful tool to help people use a more viable part of their peripheral retina instead of their damaged central vision.  
   
Cara was able to appreciate better vision with an eccentric point when looking at faces, newsreader on TV, kitchen clock on the wall.  
   
Over 12 eccentric viewing sessions with the Orthoptist (meeting fortnightly) and lots of homework set to practise between visits (words, sentences, paragraphs in decreasing print size, uno cards, playing cards, signage in the community, faces of family and friends, objects around the home and community), Cara was able to improve her vision.  
   
Distance vision: Before the training program, Cara was not able to identify any letters on a distance vision test (at 3 meters, 2 meters, 1 meter or half a meter).  She was only able to identify the number of fingers held up at half a meter in front of her.  
   
After the training program, she was able to identify the top letters on the distance vision test held at 3 meters from her using her eccentric viewing point.  
   
Near vision:  N80 (newspaper headline 88mm sized letters) pre-program, on the last day of the program, Cara was able to read N16 (standard large print 2.50mm sized letters).  Children’s story books are between N16 and N24 (4.25mm sized print).  
   
Cara is also able to see her daughter’s face (chocolate stains on her cheeks) and read shop signage at the shopping centre.  
   
She said of her experience:  
   
“I am now more confident with reading signs, using my phone, reading to my child.  I never knew that this was still possible, to be able to see words and read again. This program has also increased my confidence in using my vision when I am out of the house”  
   
“Everyone has been telling me what I couldn’t see, couldn’t do anymore.  GDV have shown me what I can still see and do”

*\*Name has been changed to protect the client’s privacy.*

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# **Our Referrals Team Are Here to Help**

Many people with low vision wait far too long to receive daily living supports. This may seriously decrease their independence and safety.  
   
Anyone can refer to Guide Dogs Victoria and by doing so you could be a part of a life-changing moment.  
   
Furthermore, many people are unaware that only 30% of our services are Guide Dog related. We have a wide range of services and we would love to let you know.  
   
If you would like information, or a presentation for you and your colleagues, please contact:  
   
Laurie Kelly, 9854 4419 Or  lauriek@guidedogsvictoria.com.au  
   
Elly Atanasova, 9854 4452  Or  [elenoraa@guidedogsvictoria.com.au](mailto:elenoraa@guidedogsvictoria.com.au)

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For **clients of all ages,** Guide Dogs Victoria offers so much More than Dogs:

* **Low vision Orthoptic Service** to educate clients and monitor vision issues, assist in making the most of declining vision, assess for magnification/tech aids to assist vision
* **Specialist Occupational Therapy & Assistive Technology advice** to support daily living skills
* **Adult and Child Mobility Service** to support safe independence at home and in the community, including Victoria's only specialist **Acquired Brain Injury Mobility service** for people experiencing low vision or blindness.



1800 804 805

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