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The Impact of Near Vision Impairment on Activities of Daily Living Across the Life Course

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older presbyopic adult no longer able to work, read, recognize money,⁹ or use a smartphone,¹⁰ or a worker in her early 30s suffering from reduced income and productivity from a combination of hyperopia and early-onset presbyopia, the situation is the same: the inability to carry out important life tasks due to an accommodative reserve that is not adequate for the job at hand without correction.

More data are needed to assess the benefits of correcting NVI in both children and adults. But it would appear that school vision screening models have neglected for too long assessment of near vision, and that more must be learned about the true prevalence of hyperopia in children and hyperopia-induced early-onset presbyopia in young adults, particularly in LMICs. There is a need to validate simpler screening protocols for childhood hyperopia appropriate for low-resource settings, and to further explore, initially through cross-sectional studies, the association between hyperopia and markers of poor reading and learning.

If such studies suggest that hyperopia is prevalent in LMIC settings such as Africa with low rates of myopia, and if appropriate detection methods are found, together with evidence of a cross-sectional association between hyperopia and reduced reading levels, trials are warranted to determine if hyperopic correction can improve learning outcomes. We are increasingly confident that the answer is “yes” regarding work productivity and correction of NVI among adults. The question of hyperopia’s impact on children’s learning is equally deserving of our attention.

The Human Development Index (HDI) championed by the United Nations Development Program highlights 3 basic measures of wellbeing: life expectancy, literacy, and per capita GDP. It increasingly appears that vision is a necessary ingredient in each of these, to give all persons equal opportunities “to thrive,

flourish, and achieve their full potential at all stages across life course”.

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