

Pediatric Cortical Visual Impairment Society

Contact: **Jessica Marquardt**
Executive Director, PCVIS
Jessica@PCVIS.vision
PCVIS.vision



MEDIA RELEASE

CEREBRAL/CORTICAL VISUAL IMPAIRMENT (CVI)

Developing Awareness for A Leading Cause of Visual Impairment in Children

Cerebral/Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) is a condition that is a leading cause of visual impairment in children in developed countries. Unlike conditions resulting from issues within the eyes themselves, CVI results from a problem in the visual pathways or processing centers of the brain. The Pediatric Cortical Visual Impairment Society (PCVIS) calls for increased awareness about CVI, its causes, challenges, and the importance of early diagnosis, interventions, education, research, and advocacy.

What Is CVI?

CVI is a condition affecting the brain's ability to process visual information, causing a spectrum of challenges. Children with CVI may have healthy eyes, but their brains struggle to make sense of the visual signals. This condition is distinct from traditional ocular visual impairment, as the cause lies within the brain rather than the eyes. Standard vision screenings may miss brain-based visual impairments like CVI, especially in children with complex medical or neurodevelopmental conditions that can obscure or complicate diagnosis.

Causes of CVI

CVI is associated with various factors that negatively affect normal brain development or function. Some of the most common causes include:

- Premature birth and related complications
- Traumatic brain injury
- Neonatal infections such as meningitis or encephalitis
- Genetic and metabolic disorders
- Stroke or other vascular abnormalities

Signs and Symptoms

Children with CVI may exhibit a range of characteristics depending upon what brain pathways are affected, including but not limited to:

- Poor and/or delayed visual attention
- Preference for certain colors
- Difficulty recognizing faces or objects
- Preference for looking at moving objects rather than still ones
- Sensitivity to visual clutter or difficulty in crowded environments
- Difficulty with fast moving objects

Impact on Lives

The condition can impact learning by interfering with access to educational materials. CVI can significantly affect a child's development and activities of daily living. Parents and caregivers of children with CVI may face challenges in navigating the healthcare system, finding resources, and advocating for their child's needs. Awareness of CVI is improving but remains limited, contributing to delays in diagnosis and intervention.

"My son is a stroke survivor, but the real reason he struggled for years and went undiagnosed until he was 18? CVI. In that time, he was misidentified, misunderstood, and lost the education he deserved. Sharing our story is painful, but I hope it helps other families find answers sooner, so that every child with CVI can be supported from the very beginning." – Mara LaViola

Importance of Early Diagnosis and Intervention

Early identification of CVI is necessary to limit its impact on a child's learning and development. A multidisciplinary approach involving ophthalmologists, neurologists, educators, and other therapists/specialists is essential for accurate diagnosis, treatment and interventions.

Advancing Research and Advocacy

Increased investment in research is critical to better understand the condition and develop effective interventions. Advocacy groups and organizations play a vital role in spreading awareness, supporting families, and lobbying for policy changes.

About PCVIS

The Pediatric Cortical Visual Impairment Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth with CVI through advocacy, education and research. Founded in 2014, PCVIS brings together professionals, families, and researchers to advance understanding and promote meaningful interventions for CVI. For more information about Cerebral/Cortical Visual Impairment, please visit PCVIS.vision.