



## Prevalence of Depression and Associated Factors among Patients with Moderate to Severe Visual Impairment and Blindness during COVID-19 Pandemic

Pankaew Tantirattanakulchai<sup>1</sup>, Nuchanad Hounnaklang<sup>\*1</sup>, Pear Ferreira Pongsachareonnont<sup>2,3</sup> and Bharkbhum Khambhiphant<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Public Health Sciences, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

<sup>2</sup>Center of Excellence in Retina, Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

<sup>3</sup> King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, Bangkok, Thailand

<sup>4</sup>Department of Ophthalmology, Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

\*Corresponding author, E-mail: Nuchanad.H@chula.ac.th

### Abstract

Depression is globally recognized as one of the key causes of disability. Likewise, the consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly made people with vision disabilities more vulnerable to health and health-related issues, especially mental health. Currently, very little evidence concerning the depression among Thai people with visual impairment exists. Therefore, the present study aims to evaluate the prevalence of depression and associated factors among patients with moderate to severe visual impairment and blindness during COVID-19 pandemic. This cross-sectional study was administered between February and July 2022 through a face-to-face interview. The following items were included in the questionnaire distribution: sociodemographic, social support (MSPSS) and depression (CES-D). Multivariable logistic regression analysis was used to explore the association between related factors and depression. Among 284 participants, the prevalence of depression was 43.0%. In multivariable logistic regression analysis, depression was significantly associated with perceived low social support (adjusted odds ratio (AOR)=3.38, 95%CI: 1.23-9.32, p=0.018). Through low social support, it is probably that participants would, to a higher extent, experience depression. The onset of depression signifies severe distress and is therefore a symptom which must be recognized and acted upon. Ophthalmologists must have required skills to recognize the signs in their initial stages and should be able to refer patients to specialists in mental healthcare in order to receive appropriate treatments. This approach is necessary to improve the mental health of visual impairment and to reduce the risk of depression.

**Keywords:** *Depression, Visual impairment, Blindness, COVID-19, Social support*