

A Study on Students Referred to the  
Ferris State University College of Optometry  
Clinic from the Residence Hall Vision Screenings  
Fall Quarter, 1992-93

by  
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1994

The residence hall vision screenings at Ferris State University are aimed towards: (1) Giving third-year optometry students an opportunity to refine their technical skills, (2) Encouraging FSU students to maintain a consistent pattern for regular eye care and educating them about the importance of this, and (3) As an added bonus, the screenings bring some new patients into the FSU Optometry Clinic. It should be realized that these screenings are not intended primarily to bring new patients into the clinic. Obviously, however, the more students who respond to their referral by seeking regular eye care, the better. Therefore, if something such as a follow-up letter can increase the number of students who seek regular eye care, especially at FSU, the more beneficial it would be. This retrospective study was aimed towards determining the effectivity of the residence hall vision screenings at bringing in new patients to the clinic, to determine whether sending a follow-up letter to referred students helped to bring more students into the clinic, or even just prompted them to go elsewhere for regular eye care. Also, the study was to determine whether having vision care insurance affected the choice to come to FSU vs. elsewhere for eye care. The motivation for doing this study was to promote the idea to the students of the importance of regular (e.g. every 2 years) eye examinations, as well as to bring more people into the FSU Optometry Clinic so as to benefit the student clinicians by giving them more patient exposure.

The screenings in this study were done on 12/7/92 (Cramer Hall), 12/9/92 (Ward and Miller Halls), 12/14/92 (Masselink Hall), and 12/16/92 (Bond Hall), and represent only 40% of the total number of residence hall screenings. Test stations evaluated case history, visual acuities (distance and near), retinoscopy, ocular alignment (cover test near and far, near stereopsis and accommodative facility with +/-1.50 lenses), and ocular health (gross pupils, external and internal). A total of 168 students were screened and 137(81.5%) were referred. Of those referred, 82(60%) were male and 55(40 %) were female. The mean age of those screened was 20.48 years, and the age range was 18-36. Any student screened that had not had an eye exam in at least two years was automatically referred, and this was the main reason for referral (124). The second most common reason was decreased visual acuity (17), then refractive status/retinoscopy (8), rounded out by ocular health (3) and "per history" (3) (a symptom or complaint not justified by test results).

A letter was sent out on March 9, 1993 (approximately 3 months after the screenings) to all 137 referred students. It provided information about the FSU Optometry Clinic and stressed the importance of regular eye examinations, in hopes of encouraging the students to come to the FSU Optometry Clinic or to go elsewhere for regular eye care. A copy of this letter can be found at the end of this report. Before this letter was sent, it was monitored as to whether any of the referred students came in to the FSU clinic for an exam, and only one student did so. A second letter containing a questionnaire asking for responses was sent out on April 20, 1993 (approximately 1 1/2 months after the first letter) to all but six of the referred students, who lived off-campus. A copy of this letter can also be found at the end of this report.

Of the 131 surveys sent out, 27(20.6%) were returned answered. Twelve surveys were returned unanswered due to students having moved

out of their dorm room. A comparison follows of the questions answered by those who did have vision care insurance and those who did not. Please refer to the second sample letter at the end of this report for the questions that were asked in the survey.

	have vision insurance		do not have vision insurance	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
(1)	6 (46%)	7 (53.8%)	1 (7.1%)	13 (93%)
(2)	2 (33%)	4 (66.7%)	0	1 (100%)
(3)	6 (85.7%)	1 (14.3%)	9 (69%)	4 (30.8%)
(4)	2 (33%)	4 (66.7%)	3 (33%)	4 (44%)

In regards to the last question, of those who did not have vision care insurance, 2 (22%) were not sure about where they would go for their next eye exam.

The following are to be taken as generalizations only, as the sample size was not large enough to reach definite conclusions in this study.

An examination of the survey results was done to determine what generalizations could be made. One of the goals of the study was to determine whether having vision care insurance affected the students' choice to come to FSUCO for regular eye care or to seek eye care elsewhere. The survey results indicate that having vision care insurance has a positive effect on the students' tendency to get regular eye exams. However, those students who did not have vision care insurance were more likely to come to FSU for their eye care vs. those who had insurance. Another goal of the study was to determine whether sending a follow-up letter to those referred helped to bring students into the clinic, or even to go elsewhere for regular eye care. Sending the follow-up letter did seem to influence students to seek regular eye care, whether it be at FSU or elsewhere. It did not seem to influence them to come to FSU over other locations; however, it may have made them think more about coming to the clinic in the future. Only 2 students (28.6%) who did have an eye exam since receiving the follow-up letter had their exam at FSU. Of those who answered "no" in #2 of the survey, 75% planned on having an eye exam in the near future, while 25% did not, and 33% did not plan on coming to FSUCO.

The residence hall vision screenings are generally not expected to prompt the referred students to suddenly change their attitudes about getting regular eye exams. The typical college student has a limited money supply and may not want to go to a doctor unless there is an urgent problem. Many students may feel that the screening will substitute for an eye exam. Since the majority were referred only because they had not gotten an eye exam in at least 2 years, and there was usually nothing else wrong, their mindset will probably not be

changed immediately. We can only hope that the screenings and follow-up letters will help to make these students think about the importance of regular eye care, and that they will make it an important part of their lives.

Some shortcomings of this study included not having a large enough sample size to reach definite conclusions, and the fact that the letters and surveys were sent out too long after the screenings, which probably decreased the return rate. In future residence hall vision screenings, a standard letter could be given at the screening to all students screened, even if they were not referred, similar to the first letter sent out in this study (informational about the FSUCO clinic/ what it has to offer, and the stressing the importance of regular eye exams). A second letter could be given at the screening to the referred students only; this letter could contain a survey, including the question of whether they actually did plan on having an eye exam as a result of the screening, and whether it will be at FSUCO. This survey should be completed by each student before leaving the screening. Follow-up letters /surveys could be sent to those people who planned on having an eye exam to see if they had an eye exam yet and if they did come to the Ferris clinic, whether they were satisfied with their service at the clinic.

By having the students read something like this and fill out a questionnaire at the screenings, it would eliminate the problem of losing track of students who move out of their dorm rooms. It may also allow more definite conclusions to be reached, instead of just generalizations, as in this study.

In conclusion, I feel that this project was worthwhile, even if it did not produce any definite conclusions, as the sample size was so small. It helped to get the message across to the students at FSU that regular eye care is important, and informed them of what the FSU Optometry Clinic has to offer. By implementing the suggestions that were made, future endeavors of this type could be much more effective, and it would be worthwhile to try at every vision screening.

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# Ferris State University

College of Optometry

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March 9, 1993

Dear Student,

I would like to thank you for participating in our annual residence hall vision screenings. I am sending you this follow-up letter as a reminder recommendation for you to get a complete vision examination in the near future since you have not had a complete exam within the past two years or longer.

Our vision screenings only test for gross vision problems and do not investigate all of the specifics as a complete eye examination does. To get an appointment for a complete vision exam through our clinic at the College of Optometry, please call 592-2222. Our comprehensive exams take about an hour and a half and cost \$30; however, we do accept vision care health insurance plans and it is worthwhile to first check with your parents to see if you may have such coverage. We have convenient examination times five days a week including evening hours on Thursdays. Otherwise, if it is more convenient to return to your home eye care practitioner, please do so. My main hope is that you develop a consistent pattern for regular comprehensive eye examinations.

Thanks again for participating in our vision screening and feel free to contact me directly at 592-2191 for any questions you may have regarding your eye care needs.

Sincerely,

James R. Miller, O.D.

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# Ferris State University

College of Optometry

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April 22, 1993

Dear Student,

My name is Christine VanDeWeghe, and I am a third-year optometry student here at Ferris. As part of my senior project, I have sent out a letter to you and other students who participated in the residence hall vision screenings this Fall and were referred to our clinic for a complete vision examination. I am now conducting a survey to determine your plans regarding your eyecare. My main hope is that you develop a consistent pattern for regular comprehensive eye exams which are important for monitoring eye health as well as determining your needs for clear and comfortable vision. Please indicate your plans below and send to Dr. Jim Miller, 410 Pennock Hall, via inter-campus mail, (which is postage-free). Your assistance is greatly appreciated!

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|--|-----|----|
| (1) Do you have vision care insurance?   | Yes | No |
| (2) Have you had a complete eye examination since you received my last letter? | Yes | No |
| (3) If you answered "yes" in #2, was your exam at our clinic?                  | Yes | No |
| (4) If you answered "no" in #2, do you plan on having one in the near future?  | Yes | No |
| (5) If you answered "yes" in #4, will it be at FSU College of Optometry?       | Yes | No |

Thank you!  
Sincerely,

Christine VanDeWeghe  
FSU College of Optometry