Introduction

Photophobia is extreme light sensitivity that can be caused by numerous culprits. Not only can it lead to visual impairment but also can be a visual handicap. Tinted contact lenses are often an overlooked option in the treatment of photophobia and can play a unique role in patients who need low vision devices in combination with decreasing brightness. They can reduce the need for constant sunglass wear and can be used in conjunction with other types of filters to provide optimum reduction in brightness.

Case Presentation

26 year-old caucasian, male, an aircraft mechanic with rod-cone dystrophy presented with a chief complaint that light bothered him to the point of discomfort. He had been given red tinted contact lenses previously with no relief in symptoms. His best corrected visual acuity was 20/100 with both eyes while wearing spectacles, but with an OcuTech VES-Explorer 3X telescope, best corrected visual acuity was 20/30 with both eyes. Due to the nature of his work, lighting environments are constantly changing as he moves from outside to inside of a plane. This created problems for him as he needs a decrease in brightness from the lights inside the plane and even more reduction when he is outside. Historically, wearing sunglasses decreased photophobia but it was difficult placing them over the OcuTech telescope, especially with frequent lighting changes. Sunglasses provided relief in photophobia while indoors, yet was not enough for decreasing photophobia outdoors.

Treatment

He was successfully fitted with Orion Sun Tac soft contact lenses in office, decreasing the overall brightness without affecting colors. This improved the patient’s symptoms indoors. An additional OcuTech gray filter was added over his telescope to help his ability to see outdoors. These filters were to be placed behind the glasses when he goes outside to provide additional reduction in the light being transmitted. By trying these contacts and filters in office, a combination of filtration was found to increase comfort indoors and outdoors, while being able to increase visual acuity with the use of the telescope over the eyes. The use of the tinted contacts allowed the patient to easily maneuver the OcuTech filter on and off, which would improve quality of life while working.

Orion Sun Tac Lenses

Sun Tac and other tinted contact lenses should be considered for all patients with various causes of photophobia. A thorough history is necessary in understanding the patient’s past treatments, what has worked versus problems with the treatment regimen, and the goals of the patient. Once the goals are determined, it’s important to test the choice of treatment in office. These tinted lenses can be very expensive therefore, trial lenses are very beneficial to understand what the overall benefits would be. In our situation, the patient noticed a significant reduction in photophobia while wearing the tinted lenses. The reduction in light was noticed immediately while being in the exam room. The patient walked outdoors to try various filters over the OcuTech telescope, finding the most relief with the gray filter.

Resources:


*All photographs posted with patient’s permission