



Enventure Research was commissioned to explore **patient and public* views** on **sight testing** using **teleoptometry models** to inform the GOC's review of its 2013 statement on testing of sight



Five online focus groups and **six telephone in-depth interviews** were conducted with participants stratified to reflect a range of **likely patient perspectives and experiences**

Awareness and understanding of teleoptometry

- Initial **low awareness** of sight testing using teleoptometry
- Generally **understood** once explained
- Increasing use of technology across healthcare and daily life makes it feel like a **logical progression**
- However, there was a **limited perceived need** among many



I think technology is advancing rapidly, and this is where we'll end up.

Patient, Northern Ireland



I never had to wait for an eye test. There was a shortage on GPs and dentists, but eye tests – nobody ever really complained about that.

Patient, Scotland

Perceived benefits of teleoptometry for patients

According to participants, the **main benefits** of using teleoptometry models for sight testing include...

Increased capacity



Reduced waiting times



Fewer cancellations



Optometrists are able to cover multiple sites



If...you live somewhere that's only maybe got one optician...that would give people access without having to wait as long.

Patient, Scotland

Improved convenience



Flexible appointment times



Reduced need to travel



Easier access to specialists



Perhaps you could see the scenario where opticians stay open a little bit later, even if it's only one night a week or so.

Patient, England

Perceived impact of teleoptometry for patients

- The **impact** of teleoptometry on patients depends on their **location** and **circumstances**
- Many are currently able to **access sight tests easily** and are generally **willing to wait** for routine appointments
- Teleoptometry viewed as a **solution** to a problem that is **not universally visible to most patients**

Participants believed that teleoptometry would have the most **positive impact** on patients such as...



Rural communities



Working people



Disabled people



If the opticians is a bus or train journey away, sometimes for people with certain disabilities that may be difficult for them, because trains aren't always the best and buses aren't either, which is potentially going to put them off.

Patient, England

Reassurance, acceptability and confidence

Participants felt that the **key factors** that would **reassure** them about teleoptometry included...



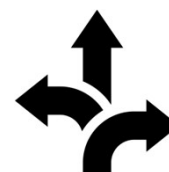
Being in an optical setting



Presence of a technician



Advancing technology



Patient choice

Openness to teleoptometry sight tests

- Views were **mixed** and **conditional**; most suitable for routine, low-risk sight tests
- Many would consider teleoptometry **if necessary**, but prefer to choose in-person where possible
- Mixed views on **delegation** and **supervision**
- Widely recognised as part of a **broader shift** towards **digital healthcare**



Perhaps it's a quicker way for people with low need or who are low risk...people who perhaps don't have any flagged, big eye issues.

Public, Wales

Factors that would increase confidence

- **Clarity** on roles, responsibilities and authority
- **Trust** in governance, regulation and professional standards
- **Evidence, testing** and **gradual introduction**
- Demonstrable **benefits** to patients
- **Choice is essential** to support confidence and ensure equitable access; an additional option rather than replacement for in-person care



As long as we don't go too far that it's only ever online...As long as there's still a balance so that every group is catered for.

Patient, England

Key concerns and perceived risks

Participants felt that the most common **concerns** and **risks** of teleoptometry were...



Missed pathology or misdiagnosis



It's that whole misdiagnosis thing, isn't it?...Would I trust it? I don't know. I'm dubious.

Patient, Northern Ireland



Reliability of technology and connectivity



What are the chances of everything working that day?...That their laptop works, their internet is secure.

Patient, England



Loss of personal interaction/rapport



I just think it's quite impersonal. It's very robotic, almost. People are not going to be treated as individuals.

Patient, England

Other concerns included...



Skills/qualifications of technicians



Unsuitability for certain groups



Insufficient oversight/quality assurance



Outsourcing outside the UK



Reduced quality of care



Cost cutting



Data security and confidentiality



Impact on independent businesses

Groups with greater risk or less suitability for teleoptometry



Those with pre-existing eye conditions



Those with poor vision or hearing



Those less confident with technology



Those with learning difficulties or additional needs



Non-English speakers



Children

Perceived optical business and workforce benefits

- Participants felt that the **benefits** were **not immediately clear** or compelling from a **patient** perspective
- There was a perception that the **benefits** may be **greater** for **optical businesses** and **professionals**

“ To be honest, I see it more for the organisations, as cost saving, rather than to the customers.

Patient, England

Conclusions



Once explained, teleoptometry is broadly understood and seen as a **logical development**



Sight tests using teleoptometry are viewed as **appropriate in specific contexts** rather than being universally necessary



Acceptability of using teleoptometry for sight tests is **conditional** based on **safeguards, communication** and **patient choice**



Confidence in sight tests using teleoptometry depends heavily on **trust** in **regulation, professional standards** and **clinical oversight**



There is some **concern** that new approaches could be introduced in ways that **reduce** rather than improve **quality of care**



Potential **benefits** of using teleoptometry for sight tests are **recognised**, but innovation must not come at the **expense** of **quality** and **patient experience**