

Does glaucoma affect cognitive function?

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Acute angle closure glaucoma of the right eye (intraocular pressure was 42 in the right eye). Credit: James Heilman, MD/Wikipedia

Previous studies have looked for links between glaucoma—a neurodegenerative disorder that's the leading cause of irreversible blindness—and cognitive function, but they've generated mixed results. Findings from a large study recently published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* suggest that any association may be small or absent.

In the study that included 7,073 US adults aged 51 years and older who were interviewed by phone every 2 years, people who developed glaucoma tended to have higher cognitive function scores but steeper rates of cognitive score decline over a maximum follow-up time of 18 years. The observed associations between glaucoma and cognitive function were small and unlikely to be clinically meaningful.

"In this large longitudinal study, a diagnosis of glaucoma was not associated with steeper rates of [cognitive decline](#); however, this study did not have access to [clinical data](#) to determine whether glaucoma-related vision loss is a risk factor for cognitive decline and dementia," said senior author Joshua R. Ehrlich MD, MP, of the University of Michigan Medical School. "This is an important question for future studies to consider."

More information: Glaucoma and Cognitive Function Trajectories in a Population-Based Study: Findings from The Health and Retirement Study, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.17903](#)

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