



Awareness of the 20-20-20 Rule Amongst Students, Faculty and Staff



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Is your vision 20-20-20?

- Every 20 minutes
- Look at something 20 feet away
- Hold your gaze for 20 seconds
- Remember to blink!



Purpose

In the past several years, medical schools have increased utilization of recorded lectures and electronic devices: computers, smartphones, and tablets. Increased screen exposure hours where students, faculty, and staff may acquire eye strain. Many are not aware of the 20-20-20 rule: for every 20 minutes of screen time, it is recommended to look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds; a reminder to take frequent breaks to help prevent eye strain. We want to share reports from our institution regarding student, faculty and staff digital device usage and awareness of the 20-20-20 rule.

Methods

Anonymous online surveys were distributed, comprised of 21 questions related to eye conditions, use of digital devices, symptoms of computer vision syndrome, an open-end comment section, and a demographics section. Information on CVS symptoms and prevention was provided for participants to download. IRB approval: NCOMIRB#22-0003E

Faculty, staff, and students (Classes of 2025, 2026, and 2027) were invited to participate. Descriptive and statistical analyses performed.

Preliminary Results

Response rate: 114 responses; 32% response rate (114/350)

Demographics:

- 23 faculty (20%), 30 staff (26%)
- 61 students (54%)
 - from Classes of 2025 (N=31; 51%), 2026 (N=23; 38%), and 2027 (N=7; 11%)
- Females 56%; males 44%

Devices & usage:

- Most commonly used devices: Smartphones, desktops and laptops
- Students used devices during the daytime (46%) or both day and night (48%)
- Faculty used devices mainly during the day (72%)
- Majority of students and faculty used devices for >1 month
 - 98% (60/61) of students noticed visual fatigue compared to 55% (29/53) of faculty

20-20-20 rule:

- Regarding the 20-20-20 rule, 70% (43/61) students and 72% (38/53) faculty were not aware.
- Of those who were aware, 72% (13/18) and 60% (9/15) of students and faculty, respectively, never or rarely implement the 20-20-20 rule.

Visual fatigue:

- Students were more likely to report increased visual fatigue (p-value <0.001).
- There were no significant differences between faculty and students regarding use of digital devices >1 month, and no relationship between noticing visual fatigue and scheduling breaks

Additional Survey Questions

- Q9. Have you heard of the 20/20/20 rule?
 Q10. If yes to question 9, how often do you implement the 20/20/20 rule?
 Q11. What digital devices do you currently use to study and/or work?
 Q14. How many hours do you currently spend on your digital device?
 Q16. Do you schedule breaks from your computer screen?
 Q17. How often do you take breaks from your computer screen?

Conclusions

We present a cross-section of device usage and awareness of the 20-20-20 rule amongst our students, faculty, and staff.

Most students and faculty were not aware of the 20-20-20 rule which highlights the importance of implementing visual health awareness within the medical school environment.

References

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