

First of Its Kind Study Illustrates Prevalence of Myopia in Canadian Children

- Published in *Eye*, Pilot Research Has Important Implications for Healthcare Policy Makers
- 6% Prevalence in Children Ages 6-8; Rises to 28.9% in Ages 11-13
- Cites Positive Impact of Outdoor Time; One More Hour Each Week Lowers Odds by 14.3%
- Axial Length Increases Provide Target for Clinical Intervention and Control

WATERLOO, Ontario, February 22, 2018—[A study published in the journal *Eye*](#) sheds light on the prevalence of myopia in Canadian children, validating findings and implications for healthcare policy makers, academic researchers and educators. Myopia, also known as nearsightedness, has been on the rise globally over the past several decades, with more severe forms being associated with high economic burden and increased risk for other vision-robbing conditions.

Findings in [Myopia Prevalence in Canadian School Children: a Pilot Study](#) indicated that while the rate of myopia was 6% in children aged 6-8, it soars to 28.9% in children aged 11-13. For one additional hour spent outdoors each week, the odds of being myopic were lowered by 14.3%. Genetics also play a role: children with at least one myopic parent were 2.52 times more likely to be myopic as well.

This study, the first of its kind in Canada, was conducted by the [Centre for Ocular Research & Education \(CORE\)](#), the [University of Waterloo's School of Optometry & Vision Science](#) and the [Canadian National Institute for the Blind](#). *Eye* is the official journal of The Royal College of Ophthalmologists and is part of the esteemed Nature Research publishing group.

“Myopia is receiving significant attention from the eye health community worldwide, as incidence rates continue to climb among children at a startling pace,” said Mike Yang, OD, the paper’s lead investigator and a clinical associate at CORE. “Our research—the first non-clinical-practice-based epidemiological survey of myopia prevalence in Canada—paints a troubling picture, yet also shows the beneficial impact of outdoor

time. We believe it adds meaningful, objective, and actionable knowledge to the research and clinical communities, as more efforts are placed against overcoming this critical and ever-growing problem.”

“The prevalence of myopia and the shift toward onset at an earlier age highlights the growing need for strategies to slow down its progression,” said Debbie Jones, FCOptom, FAAO, clinical professor at the School of Optometry & Vision Science and clinical scientist at the Centre for Ocular Research & Education. “CORE has played a significant role in clinical studies that have demonstrated the ability to control myopic progression. Patients may benefit from lower levels of myopia than if left unaddressed, likely lowering levels of sight threatening myopic complications.”

The paper notes that larger national studies would be able to provide even more evidence-based recommendations to the general public and healthcare stakeholders.

[Myopia Prevalence in Canadian School Children: a Pilot Study](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41433-018-0015-5.epdf) can be accessed online at <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41433-018-0015-5.epdf>.

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The [Centre for Ocular Research & Education \(CORE\)](#) – formerly known as the Centre for Contact Lens Research – was established in 1988 at the University of Waterloo’s [School of Optometry & Vision Science](#). Over the next two decades, founding director Desmond Fonn developed the organization from a three-person operation into a thriving hub of basic and applied research, playing a significant role in the early development and testing of silicone hydrogel lenses and the role of oxygen in corneal health, along with many other initiatives related to the performance of contact lenses and solutions.

In 2011, [Lyndon Jones](#) was appointed director and has continued to inspire the organization’s evolution. Today, its approximately [50-person team](#) collaborates with sponsors, agencies and academia on advanced biosciences, clinical research and education, providing uncompromising independence and results of the highest quality. It serves a range of ophthalmic sectors, including medical devices, ocular pharmaceuticals, digital technology and others, with a focus on the anterior segment. For more information, please visit core.uwaterloo.ca.

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