

## **An evaluation of surgical outcomes of a short-term cataract mission in Peru over 10 years**

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**Purpose:** Nearly 90% of the visually impaired live in low- and middle-income countries with cataracts accounting for roughly half of all cases in these regions. Consequently, hundreds of charitable missions designed to perform a high volume of cataract surgeries over a short period of time have been undertaken over the past few decades. The efficacy of these short-term missions in relieving the global burden of disease remains poorly characterized.

**Methods:** We present an analysis of the postoperative outcomes of a short-term cataract program in Piura, Peru. We assess the rate of complications, as well as the operative outcomes as they compare to World Health Organization (WHO)-established standards and local surgeon outcomes.

**Results:** 474 eyes from 358 patients were included in the study. The mean visual acuity prior to cataract operation was 1.50 (Snellen 20/640). This value increased significantly at 1 week post-operation, 1.00 (Snellen 20/200). The distribution of good, borderline, and poor outcomes was 28%, 41%, and 30%, respectively at seven days post-operation. 38% of the poor outcomes were due to spectacles, 18% due to patient selection, and 20% due to surgical complications.

**Conclusion:** Although the short-term cataract mission yielded a significant increase in patients' visual acuity after surgery, the distribution of good, borderline, and poor outcomes falls short of WHO-established standards pointing to pitfalls in the delivery of care that remain unaddressed. Given that the outcome profile of the charitable mission is comparable to that of local surgeons, it is suggested that these barriers are more structural in nature and less related to differences in surgical technique and experience between visiting and Peruvian ophthalmologists.