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Social Competence in Visual Rehabilitation: Enhancing Social Participation

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Inspiring Minds Essay

Adults with acquired vision disability (VD) experience challenges to their social competence, which hamper them in developing and maintaining healthy social relationships. Over 5.5 million Canadians with acquired VD are at risk of loneliness and social isolation. Narrow social networks mean reduced social participation and lower general health and wellbeing. Visual rehabilitation (VR) is facilitating social integration of adults with VD, but too often lacks essential support. Using participatory action research, my PhD research will recommend ways to enhance programming to support adults with acquired VD to regain social competencies. What aspects of VR need to be improved to support their social competence skills?

My experience of working and living with a VD sparked my motivation and interest to undertake this research. There is a lack of empirically, theoretically, and methodologically rigorous research focused on social competence programming in VR. My groundbreaking research will inform VR and policy reform.