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HealthFirst-Tunnel vision

 By Leslie LoBue

UNDATED (WJRT) - (12/13/06)-- One of those problems that comes with age is tunnel vision, but we don't usually hear about it.

HealthFirst reporter Leslie LoBue explains how a special pair of glasses could help the thousands of adults who live with tunnel vision see the world differently.

One in 200 people over 50 have tunnel vision, a condition that all but eliminates peripheral vision.

It looks like a video game, but the screen and glasses are changing the way Cory MacDonald sees the world. At age four, he was diagnosed with choroideremia, a disease that causes tunnel vision. "Out of a possible 180 degrees of visual field that a person can have, I have about three."

Doctor Eli Peli, a vision researcher, says one in 200 people have tunnel vision, which makes finding nearly everything a daunting task.

"It's amazing how many times you search for things in your environment - where did I put that key? Where did I put those glasses? Where did I put the cup? It is something that we do every day."

These new glasses could change everything. A camera minifies the world to maximize the visual field.

Details are then displayed on a screen on the lens so patients can read things like road signs.



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"With this device, you get an overall view in which you can identify the thing you want, and then go to it and then get the details on it," Peli said.

Without the glasses, MacDonald misses images that pop up on the screen. With the glasses, he sees nearly all of them.

In another test, he searches endlessly for a paperweight. Put the glasses on and he finds it easily.

"I would wear them anytime I left my house and probably many times inside my house," he said.

He relies on his cane right now but hopes the glasses will be soon ready for public use. "These glasses are very exciting to me."

These glasses are still under study. The next phase of research will look at how useful they are for people when they are used outdoors.

You can see the ABC12 report by clicking on the video icon above. You will need Windows Media Player to view this video. You can get it FREE at <http://www.microsoft.com>. NOTE: Video clips will only be available for 7-days from the date they were created. ALSO: Video clips may play in a separate window, without audio, on Mac OS X machines. abc12.com is aware of this issue and is working with the video player vendor to correct it as soon as possible. Copyright 2006 ABC Inc., WJRT-TV Inc.



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