Methods

For this body of research, I chose to explore this research further by educating the general public about it visually. In one case study, 60 healthy individuals were tested and 40 depressed individuals were tested through a pattern electroretinogram. The participants were shown different contrasted squares. Conscious vision was not tested, as this is an objective test. I used this research to explore my own by visually showing the results of these tests to help people understand depression from the standpoint of a non-depressed person. By combining graphic design with this research I was able to visually show the differences in color perception and bring awareness to the issue with this pamphlet, the non-depressed will be able to visibly see a difference in the retina. By showing these differences side by side, one with less contrast and one with more contrast, healthy people will be able to see the potential difference a depressed individual sees. In addition to a pamphlet, a small poster will highlight the visual research with the scientific research to help people understand depression.

Results

Through this study, it was found there is a significant difference in the depressed individuals and the healthy individuals. Depressed participants as a whole scored significantly lower than their counterparts regardless of whether or not the participant was taking medication. The hypothesis on this is because dopamine levels are directly connected to the retina. For this body of research, I chose to explore this research to help people understand depression in a visual way. (Image 2 and 3) These two images can give an idea of the possible differences found between depressed and healthy people. In turn, lower levels of dopamine equals lower contrast. This research resulted in using gray surrounded by color to show the visual differences that depressed people see in the world. The focus of the pamphlet is gray surrounded by color to visually show this research to help educate.

Conclusion

From this research we can not only see the difference in color perception between those who are not depressed and those who are depressed, but we can also see that people who are depressed see the world in a different way. A less colorful way. With lower color perception, the world is not as bright. Things bring up phrases that relate color to mood. The common phrase, “feeling gray,” actually has some truth to it. Individuals who are depressed really see less visual contrast. This results in them seeing the world as more gray. Their world is more dull than a mentally healthy individual. Another phrase associated with color is “Brighten up.” This phrase is usually said to someone who is feeling sad. This is an interesting phrase to look at because it associates more color with more happiness. Our associations with mood and color go both ways. We can use these common phrases to help the public understand this lack of color that depressed individuals see.

Katelyn Zabriskie
Utah State University


