

MEDIA STATEMENT

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COULD COLOUR BLINDNESS IN MEN BE AN ADVANTAGE?

A new Western Australian study aims to find out whether colour blindness in men can actually be an advantage.

Long considered a minor disability, colour blindness for red and green affects eight in 100 men but just one in 100 women.

Lions Eye Institute Managing Director Professor David Mackey, who is leading the study, said affected people saw the world in shades of two colours.

“Perhaps being colour blind has some special advantages that have gone unrecognised until now,” Professor Mackey said.

“It just may be that people who see the world in two colours have more accurate vision-perception skills in some circumstances. It also may be that they are less distracted by colours in the environment and therefore are very well-suited to jobs requiring acute visual perception such as search and rescue and police forensics.”

The Lions Eye Institute (LEI) and The University of Western Australia have launched a crowdfunding campaign seeking community support to finance the research study.

Men aged 18 to 30 will be recruited for the study, which will compare the skills of those who are colour blind with those who have normal colour vision.

Professor Mackey, a world-renowned expert in eye genetics, believes there may be a reason why colour blindness has been preserved in our genes.

“We know that some job opportunities are ‘off-limits’ to people with colour blindness,” he said.

“This study will help us understand when and how being colour blind could be an advantage rather than a disability.

“This may help to open up employment opportunities or at least better utilise people with a colour vision deficit. It will also increase our understanding of image and colour processing in the eye and brain.”

People who would like to support the research project are asked to visit <http://crowdresearch.uwa.edu.au/contribute/> The research team is also looking to recruit young men who would like to know more about their own colour vision skills: contact Julie Crewe: Julie.crewe@lei.org.au for more information.

MEDIA REFERENCE

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