



What's New in Ophthalmology Today?

Feel Blue? See Gray.

The visual portrayal of depression in the world of art has been through darkness; shades of grays and no bright colors. "Scientific findings now lend empirical support to this representation of depression that **everything looks gray when you feel blue**" reports *Medical News Today*. In the recent issue of *Biological Psychiatry*, Dr. Emanuel Bubl and colleagues report that patients suffering with depression actually had trouble with their contrast sensitivity. **Contrast sensitivity** testing measures one's ability to tell light from dark; looking at black and white stripes and seeing the separate lines. Now, as black lines fade to a blur it gets more difficult to distinguish the very thin black stripes from the white stripes. People who are depressed do poorly on this test. Dr. Bubl actually tested the retina's contrast sensitivity with an electroretinogram, "which is like an EKG for the heart". He tested three groups of patients: a. normal patients, b. depressed patients who were being treated for their depression; and, c. depressed patients not receiving therapy. **"They found dramatically lower retinal contrast in the depressed patients, regardless of whether or not they were receiving antidepressant medication"**. Also, those who were more severely depressed performed poorer on the tests. In fact these results can be used to distinguish depressed patients from the healthy subjects. **Depression does indeed render the visual world a place of shades of gray, with little contrast, "a less pleasurable place."** The eyes really are windows to the soul.

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