

Ocular Manifestations of SARS-CoV-2

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ABSTRACT

In December 2019, the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV2 emerged from Wuhan, China and rapidly spread worldwide, causing thousands of deaths due to severe acute respiratory syndrome. Several patients who were tested positive for Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) presented with ocular symptomatology, such as eye redness and irritation, posing a question on how coronavirus can affect the eye and its components. Typically, coronaviruses cause self-limiting upper respiratory infections, with a wide spectrum of clinical manifestations. Ocular tropism of respiratory viruses, coronaviruses included, is proven in animal models, producing a broad spectrum of ocular manifestations from conjunctivitis and anterior uveitis to optic neuritis and retinitis. Although humans rarely present ocular complications, conjunctivitis may be an ocular manifestation of SARS-CoV-2 infection. Ocular manifestations consist in conjunctival hyperemia, chemosis, epiphora, or increased secretions. According to some authors, there could be a positive correlation between these ocular abnormalities and the severity of the pneumonia caused by SARS-CoV2. Ocular involvement is important mainly for the risk of transmission through infected tears and secretions. In fact, there is a study suggesting that ophthalmologists are among the physicians who were more infected by this novel coronavirus, compared to other specialties. Indeed, Li Wenliang, a Chinese ophthalmologist was one of the first doctors who sounded the alarm about the spread of this novel Coronavirus. Thus, ophthalmologists and other healthcare professionals should adopt appropriate measures in order to prevent virus spread.

Keywords: Coronavirus, SARS-CoV2, Conjunctivitis, Epiphora, COVID-19

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