

8 April 2020.

Dear Optometry colleagues,

We have noticed in Bristol Eye Hospital (BEH) a significant reduction in the number of patients presenting with acute retinal detachment each day since the Covid-19 lockdown.

This has been noticed by other tertiary referral Vitreoretinal units across the UK including Moorfields & Glasgow. The concern is that patients are permanently losing vision at home because they cannot access the usual diagnosis and referral pathway via their opticians.

The RCOphth, The College of Optometrists and AoMRC have already recently produced guidance for the situation.

The AoMRC and FRCOphth have produced the following statement that covers all of medicine because the same problem of reduced presentations is affecting other emergency situations:

[https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/2020/04/aomrc-and-rcophth-urge-patients-to-
seek-medical-treatment-for-other-medical-conditions-during-covid-19/](https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/2020/04/aomrc-and-rcophth-urge-patients-to-seek-medical-treatment-for-other-medical-conditions-during-covid-19/)

In addition, the RCOphth and The College of Optometrists has produced the following joint statement to minimise the risk of visual loss by maintaining essential eye care in hospitals and the community:

[https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/2020/04/ophthalmology-and-optometry-patient-
management-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/](https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/2020/04/ophthalmology-and-optometry-patient-management-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/)

Flow chart produced by RCOphth and The College of Optometrists:

[https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Ophthalmology-
and-Optometry-patient-management-during-COVID-19-030420-APPENDIX-1-
FLOW-CHART.pdf](https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Ophthalmology-and-Optometry-patient-management-during-COVID-19-030420-APPENDIX-1-FLOW-CHART.pdf)

From a Local perspective, in line with the national recommendations, if possible consideration should be given to the following:

- Optometry Teleconferencing or Skype consultations – contact the LOC for more info on the free apps available for this
- If Optometry practices are open, maintain recommended social distancing and avoid close examinations such a direct ophthalmoscopy.

- Advertise Optometry Teleconferencing / phone lines and which practices are open or taking calls.

- If retinal detachment is suspected refer directly to your local Vitreoretinal unit (BEH VR Fellow contact number is 07468 759 071)

- Symptoms that need urgent referral:

- Rapid visual loss / new shadow / visual field defect especially if rapidly getting worse, often preceded by a recent period of new floaters and flashes
- Sudden loss of vision or vision that becomes rapidly worse (over a week or less)
- Eye continuously painful and red for more than 24 Hours.
- New double vision especially with pain / headache
- Exacerbation of known chronic condition (eg. uveitis, AMD, herpetic keratouveitis)

Note Paediatrics Consultants would like to point out that previous referrals for blurred/raised disc margins in an otherwise well child with no symptoms or signs of raised intracranial pressure are not currently being seen by the HES during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, if you have new concerns regarding symptoms or signs in a previously referred child that was initially asymptomatic, please contact the Paediatric team secretary at BEH by: Writing to BEH via the normal route (triaging of letters is still going on) or by email to: Gail.Winstone@uhbristol.nhs.uk or send the child to BEH A+E depending on the level of concern.

Best regards,

Richard

Richard J Haynes MB BCH FRCOphth MD
Consultant Vitreoretinal Surgeon
Bristol Eye Hospital
BEAVRS Professional Standards Lead