

A round-up of the eye related hot topics that have been trending on social media over the last few weeks.

#COVID-19prevention #spectacles

Ocular transmission of COVID-19 was discussed from the very beginning of the pandemic [1-3]. Indeed, it was an Ophthalmologist, Dr Li Wenliang, who first sounded the alarm about the novel disease [4]. Observational studies [5,6] and an Indian study, which studied the introduction of face shields in addition to personal protective equipment and hand hygiene [7], have suggested the eyes are a relevant route of transmission. Recently, a non-peer-reviewed study found that for a cohort of patients in Northern India (n=304), there was a two to three times reduced risk of contracting COVID-19 if the patient continuously wore spectacles during the day and during outdoor activities [8]. This is not the first study to report this finding, and the finding has been reported in a peer-reviewed journal [9]. It is speculated that spectacles may provide protection as a physical barrier to the eyes, as face touching is a frequent habit, with a study reporting a mean of 23 times an hour, and 27% of that involving the eyes [10]. If you are a spectacle wearer, this might be the perfect excuse for a new pair of frames!

#blindanddeafdog #stealingfood

Blind and deaf doggie Curtis was caught red-handed on his owner's security camera grabbing pots and pans off the hob and plates off the counter at 5am. Because he is deaf, his owners say he is untrainable, and they let him be. Not only is he good at nicking food in the middle of the night, he is also known to stealthily take food from peoples' plates and bags when they're momentarily distracted, earning him the title of "ninja dog". If you need a laugh, I'd recommend checking out the video available at the link [11].

#bitcoin #LaserRayUntil100K

Bitcoin holders recently started a meme associated with the hashtag #LaserRayUntil100K [12]. It involved changing their Twitter profile pictures so that laser beams appeared to emit from their eyes [12]. The intent was to keep this altered profile picture until Bitcoin, which was valued at \$50,000 USD on 16 February 2021 attained a value of \$100,000 USD. Sen. Cynthia Lumimis (Wyoming) and Rep. Warren Davidson (Ohio) showed their support, triggering an explainer on the phenomenon to be published by Forbes [13].

#eyeyoga #eyestrain

One of the few memories I have of my grandparents is of my grandfather showing me his 'eye exercises'. He looked all directions of gaze repeatedly for a set number of times, and then did essentially what are convergence exercises. I forgot about this until my mum mentioned she had started doing eye exercises and felt like it was improving her vision. To my amusement, I discovered that this has now been trendily repackaged as 'eye yoga' in both *Stylist* [14] and *Vogue* [15]. Nevertheless, it is topical because over the last year, we have all had exponential amounts of screen time, and complaints of digital eye strain have increased accordingly.

My fellow doctors will be screaming at me now, "But is there any evidence?" A search of 'eye yoga' on Pubmed yielded some interesting reading. Eye yoga has been reported in small, non-randomised studies to relieve symptoms of eye fatigue [16,17]. These studies both used subjective outcome measures. These steps of "palming, blinking, sideways viewing, front and sideways viewing, rotational viewing, up / down viewing, preliminary nose-tip gazing, near / distant viewing" [17], and additionally "concentrated gazing, and acupressure point on the palm" were examined in these studies. This is more or less the routine that the journalist from *Stylist* followed in her article [14]. If you are curious, check out the link [14] for the full routine. Additionally, a study examining eye yoga found that a 10-minute routine consisting of an initial relaxation sequence followed by slow continuous movements in all directions of gaze and including circular movements of the eyeballs, then followed by palming (rubbing palms to eyeballs without applying pressure) was found to reduce intraocular pressure and increase average retinal thickness at the macula, but it must be stressed the absolute values of these differences were negligible [18]. So, the verdict is out on whether eye yoga has any tangible benefits for eye health, but it might help with subjective symptoms of eye fatigue.

(Please note: the studies quoted were small, non-randomised studies, hence the quality of the evidence to date is not robust.)

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(All links last accessed March 2021)

SECTION EDITOR



Stephanie Chiu,

Specialty Registrar Year 5, Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield, UK.

E: schiu@doctors.org.uk