

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

### #ChrisMcCausland

#### #StrictlyWinner

"I hope that anybody out there that doesn't know someone who is blind now has higher expectations of what can be possible" are touching words from *Strictly Come Dancing's* first blind winner [1]. Having written about him over the past two issues, there is no other story I could possibly start with. Chris McCausland, who lost his sight at the age of 22 to retinitis pigmentosa, has lifted the glitterball trophy! Watching his journey across the season has been emotional and inspiring, to me and countless others across the country. People working in charities associated with vision loss have spoken about how Chris' win will break down barriers for those with visual impairment and praised his dance partner Dianne for showing how we can all contribute to making the world a more accessible place [2]. There were some particularly thoughtful comments from the Royal National College for the Blind, where Chris previously studied in the 90s. Students talked about how surreal it was to see his success, and highlighted how important it is to see people with visual impairment "actually living a good life" [3]. I saw one of my department's dry eye patients a week after his win, and when discussing her use of ocular lubricants, she said that nothing has ever made her eyes so wet as the continuous stream of tears from watching Chris in the final. Maybe I should start prescribing a selection of emotional TV finales to watch as needed for symptomatic relief of aqueous deficient dry eye.

#### #StarAward #BraveryAward

While Chris dominated the headlines, there are other trending stories that feature inspiring people with visual impairments. Four-year-old Ella, based in Hull, was diagnosed with bilateral retinoblastoma when she was in her first year of life. She has subsequently lost one eye and had it replaced with a prosthesis, while the remaining eye is severely sight impaired. Cancer Research UK have awarded Ella with a Star Award, recognising her bravery in the face of adversity at such a young age [4]. Eleven-year-old Betsy in Hertfordshire has recently achieved her dream of presenting her own radio show on BBC Three Counties Radio, a prize from having won their Make a Difference bravery award in 2024 [5]. Betsy has a YouTube channel focusing on positive and uplifting content in the context of her being completely blind from an optic nerve glioma. I was especially pleased to

hear that her show focused on rock'n'roll and country music from the 1950s and 60s, featuring the likes of Willie Nelson and Chuck Berry. Given that recent musical trends tend to focus on TikTok dances to the latest pop hit, it is wonderful to see a member of Gen Alpha champion the greats of a bygone era.

#### #Recall #Systane

Making headlines over the world, Alcon issued a recall of their Systane lubricant eyedrops after one user in America discovered their drop to have a fungal contamination [6]. The US Federal Drug Administration issued a warning that this could, in rare instances, cause a life-threatening infection in those who are immunocompromised. Alcon initiated a voluntary recall once the discovery of the fungal contamination was made. Thankfully, it seems to be an isolated incident involving the single vial returned by the customer, with no associated adverse events reported.

#### #Cornea #Tattoo

Corneal tattooing, or keratopigmentation, is generally reserved for addressing a cosmetic disfigurement like a cloudy cornea, or helping to reduce glare with iris damage. Alarmingly, posts supporting this in healthy eyes have been on the rise on TikTok, with influencers getting it done just to change their eye colour [7]. Along with the established risks of the procedure, there are no long-term studies specifically looking into the outcomes of keratopigmentation in patients with otherwise healthy eyes. This is one of the reasons why it is not available in the UK for purely cosmetic purposes in patients with no other ocular problems, though it does not stop people from travelling for the procedure. Essex-based cryptocurrency investor Cameron Briggs went to America for the treatment, opting to make just one eye a bluish-grey to match the eyes of his pet dog [8]. I guess that is sweet in a way, but I cannot, in good faith, advocate this procedure as a means to show appreciation for your pet. Regarding the risks, he said, somewhat morbidly, "if I get one eye and leave the other, at least I'll only go blind in one eye."

#### #Glue #Burn #Splinter

Various news outlets have been running stories of different ocular injuries. A woman in North Carolina accidentally picked up her nail glue instead of her regular eyedrops, sealing her eyelids shut [9]. She ended up being hospitalised and has been told it

will be weeks before the eyelids are able to be opened, when the eyes themselves will then need to be assessed for damage. Former *Britain's Got Talent* finalist Damien O'Brien accidentally got a steroid cream into his eye, resulting in chemical burns to 70% of his cornea [10]. He told his 40,000 followers on Instagram how he was likely to be left with permanent vision loss to some degree, but thanked the team at Moorfields for their care as he focuses on his recovery. Finally, with almost 600,000 views, Sydney White showed her TikTok audience the small splinter of wood embedded into her sclera, from a trip to Harry Potter World in California 10 years ago [11]. After seeing numerous doctors, she was told there was no need to remove it as it was not causing her any harm. That is one unique souvenir, but I think I'll stick to fridge magnets.

#### References

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[All links last accessed January 2025]

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