

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

#Inspiration #FlyingEyeHospital

It was with great sadness that I read about the passing of Dr David Paton at the age of 94 [1]. The innovative ophthalmologist was the creator of the Flying Eye Hospital. The plane, with an operating theatre, recovery room and teaching facilities, was his response to feeling disparaged at the increasing cases of preventable blindness in developing nations. He raised funds for this idea on his own, even convincing the chief executive of United Airlines in 1980 to donate an aircraft. Flying across the globe to those in need, Dr Paton and his volunteers for the trip provided life-changing ophthalmological care. The Flying Eye Hospital was even visited by prominent figures of the times, including Mother Teresa and Fidel Castro. His life story is an incredible read, from graduating Princeton University and the mantle of Medical Director of the King Khaled Eye Specialist Hospital in Riyadh, to being awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal by President Ronald Reagan. He was willing to take risks for the ideals he held himself to and will undoubtedly continue to be an inspiration for years to come.

#Colours #Olo

This is the story I have been questioned about the most from the recent news cycle, with multiple outlets picking up on a study from the US where a group of scientists claim to have discovered a new colour that no human has ever seen before [2]. Sounds impossible, right? The research team have called this new colour 'olo' and was described as being in the blue-green region of the colour palette, but more saturated than anything that can be seen in the real world. When the retina is stimulated during everyday life, light hits the photoreceptor layer and the cone cells fire off their signals. Given the natural overlap in function of the three cone cells, S, L and M, they all end up being stimulated. The team, based in California, used lasers to only act on M cones, which theoretically causes a signal to be sent to the brain that would be impossible to occur in natural conditions. While this seems amazing, there is debate as to whether 'olo' is truly a new colour or instead a perceived alteration in sensitivity to an existing colour. Either way, it is a technical marvel to be able to selectively trigger one set of cone cells and the authors are working to figure out a useful application to help colour blind individuals in the future.

#Inquest #Driving

The widely reported inquest into the deaths of four people caused by drivers with failing eyesight brings an important topic to the forefront of conversation. Senior Coroner Dr James Adeley has sent his report to the transport secretary, calling for measures to be taken to prevent future deaths [3]. Adeley expressed concerns regarding the UK's self-reporting system for visual conditions, being only one of three countries in Europe that take such an approach. The incidents of the lives lost are heartbreaking to read and reinforce the vital need to be mindful of every patient's driving status when we are seeing them in clinic.

#WorldRecord #EyeballPop

I've spent many afternoons in orbital clinics performing exophthalmometry and judging whether a patient's globe position has changed, but I am yet to come across someone who is able to voluntarily protrude their eyes. Maybe if I lived in Milan, I could see this, as the Italian city is the home of Williams Martin Sanchez Lopez, who has made headlines by obtaining the official Guinness World Record title of 'farthest eyeball pop (male)' [4]. I have seen the absolutely stunning photos of Williams, who is able to protrude his eyes a whole 19mm further forward than their resting position. He has a strong social media presence, with almost half a million followers on Instagram alone, where he often posts videos surprising members of the public with his unique skill. Honestly, I cannot stress enough how much I recommend you stop reading here to look him up and see what he can do. The way his eyes move so prominently, pushing past his eyelids, with these often-cartoonish facial expressions he pulls... I have no more words, you just have to see him for yourself.

#BlindDave #LondonMarathon

'Blind Dave' Heeley has run, cycled and swam the equivalent of three times around the world over the numerous endurance events he has participated in since losing his sight in his early 30s. He has raised millions of pounds for charity over the years and has talked about how he has accepted his blindness in positivity, appreciating how it has taken him to places and achievements he never thought he would have been a part of. He has most recently made the news talking about the London Marathon, which he described as one of the most emotional runs to date, as he had the opportunity to race alongside

his three daughters [5]. He speaks with such enthusiasm and joy, it is inspirational, motivational and makes me want to put on my running shoes and hit the streets. I don't quite think I'm at the point of running a marathon just yet, but maybe I'll add it to my Personal Development Plan.

#Snooker #Williams

I live in Sheffield, so have been enjoying the atmosphere in the city with the snooker World Championship being hosted in the Crucible. Mark Williams' semi-final against Judd Trump was probably my highlight of the tournament, but also appreciated his valiant effort against Zhao Xintong in the final. Though just getting to the final is an incredible achievement as Williams calls himself 'half-blind' at the moment, with blurred vision and multiple images hampering his performance [6]. He has scheduled lens-replacement surgery and hopes that will keep him playing for years to come.

References

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/25/science/david-paton-dead.html>
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3. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/apr/17/visual-legal-standards-for-uk-motorists-ineffective-and-unsafe-inquest-finds>
4. <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2025/4/this-mans-enormous-orbs-got-him-a-jaw-dropping-record-title-for-farthest-eyeball-pop>
5. <https://www.skysports.com/more-sports/athletics/video/29876/13354086/blind-dave-heeley-set-for-emotional-marathon-finale>
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[All links last accessed May 2025]

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