

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

### #Euros #Lionesses

What a treat it is to be a football fan at the moment. An enthralling season in the Premier League, some shocking results in the Club World Cup, and then the Woman's Euro 2025. I will be avidly watching, hoping to see England retain their title. There is one player I will be following particularly closely: England's goalkeeper Hannah Hampton. Many have reported on her having a strabismus as a child and undergoing multiple operations to try and correct her sight [1]. She still struggles with depth perception, which I found surprising given how excellent she is on the ball, where the coordination of her play gives nothing away about her ocular history. She had been told from a young age that she would not be able to play football at all, making it even more amazing to see her defy the odds and become a Lioness.

### #CreepyCrawlies

Sometimes I come across stories that let me know exactly what I am in for from the headline, but I still can't look away. And when I saw 'British man on holiday thought he had sweat in his eye – it was blood-sucking leech', I couldn't click on it fast enough [2]. What a story! Tony Hall was in Indonesia on a two-hour trek through the jungle to try and photograph some birds. It was hot, he was sweaty – he thinks he must have rubbed his face with the back of his hand and thought maybe a bug or something had gone in his eye. He tried not to think about it too much until one of the guys he was with pointed out that he had a leech stuck on his eye! Worried that it would wriggle its way to the back of his eyeball, he tried to pull it out, but it was fixed into place. Leeches are notorious for not letting go once they have taken a bite of tissue, and this one was steadfast. Tony had to go to two hospitals to try and find an eye specialist, and eventually had it removed with a pair of tweezers. Following a course of eye drops, things have settled well. But that isn't the only story of a little critter causing a stir in ophthalmic circles recently. In California, a couple were clearing out an old shed when they came across a large black widow spider [3]. The husband grabbed his hammer and hit it, but the resulting spider-explosion sent a piece of it straight into his wife's eye. Immediately, she was hit with the symptoms of a spider bite, with pain and swelling, followed by the full body effects of being poisoned with black widow venom. She sought medical attention and after receiving appropriate treatment made a full recovery, but the official

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diagnosis was recorded as “accidental envenomation via ocular absorption.” I had no idea something like that could happen and it makes me even more thankful we don't have too many tropical spiders in Sheffield.

### #EagleEyed #OcularTrauma

A 38-year-old man in Coventry tripped on his rug recently, falling onto a 15cm brass statuette of an eagle by his fireplace [4]. The wing of the figurine was lodged in the orbit, piercing through into his sinuses, but missing the brain. It took a combined team of neurosurgery, ENT and ophthalmology in theatre to remove the eagle and repair the damage. If they all walked into a bar then it might be the start of some cheesy joke, but in this instance, it would probably be a well-deserved drink. The images of the injury in the various news reports are truly remarkable, he seems very lucky to have avoided losing the eye entirely. He did suffer a bleed into the anterior chamber, damage to lid structures and his resulting vision is only 6/60, but he is now in a stable condition with the globe intact.

### #TikTok #Eyelashes

I sit before you bewildered. Even after reading about eyeball leeches, ocular poisoning and eagle statuettes, TikTok always manages to sweep in and floor me with the most insane trends. It seems that, in a bid to appear more manly, some men are getting their eyelashes trimmed down [5]. My social media algorithm must know that I am an ophthalmologist and so shields me from the influencers preaching it as part of the broader trend of 'ultra-masculine looksmaxxing' (which is a whole separate rabbit hole I won't delve into now – my editor gives me a word count to keep me mildly on track), but I do get the many articles that come out in similar disbelief. The root of this trend will be complex and multifactorial, but with young men across the world dealing with the complications

of trimming their eyelashes, hopefully this won't be one that sticks around.

### #LASIK #Complications

On a sombre note to finish, it is so important that patients are fully engaged with understanding any procedure they may undertake and truly appreciate the risks they are accepting when they sign a consent form. I say this as a tonne of news articles surrounding the risks of LASIK have come up following the story of a police officer in Pennsylvania hitting the headlines [6]. Ryan Kingerski (26) took his own life after suffering significant side-effects following his LASIK procedure, specifically calling out the procedure in his suicide notes as a source of his despair. It is tough to read about what he went through and how he must have felt so helpless, but there are parallels to previous articles. One of the more high-profile stories was about Detroit TV Meteorologist Jessica Starr, who hanged herself and left a 30-page suicide note attributing the breakdown in her emotional state to her LASIK surgery. A stark reminder of the significance of diligent patient counselling before any procedure.

#### References

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[All links last accessed July 2025]

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