

**Orbis and Hong Kong Ophthalmological Society Survey involving more than 3,500 people in Hong Kong indicates low public awareness of eye floaters-related eye diseases**

**75% of respondents had symptoms of eye floaters but no intention of seeking medical attention**

*An online public survey was conducted by Orbis and Hong Kong Ophthalmological Society (HKOS) to evaluate the risk and public awareness of eye floaters-related eye diseases. The survey involved 3,578 people and 75% had symptoms of eye floaters; however, more than 70% did not seek medical attention and more than 30% thought eye examinations were unnecessary, ignoring the fact that acute presentation of eye floaters could be associated with underlying severe eye diseases. At today's ORBIS World Sight Day (WSD) 2021 Advocacy and Awards Ceremony at ATLASPACE, event co-hosts, Orbis and HKOS reminded public of the risk of severe eye diseases presented with eye floaters and advised people to take good care of their eyes and have regular eye examinations by eye doctors.*

**More than 70% of survey respondents ignored the symptoms of malignant eye floaters and had no intention of seeking medical attention**

The survey results were presented at today's WSD 2021 Advocacy and Awards Ceremony. It revealed many people were unaware that eye floaters could be related to severe eye diseases and had no intention of seeking medical attention.

In this survey of 3,578 participants, 2,667 had eye floaters (75%). Around 70% of them did not attend regular eye examinations and 30% thought medical attention was unnecessary even if the eye floaters appeared acutely. The survey also revealed that 648 respondents had additional symptoms of malignant eye floaters related to retinal detachment, such as seeing flashes or peripheral visual field loss; however, 74% of them had ignored these symptoms and did not attend regular eye examinations.

HKOS Council Member, Dr Iu Pui Leung Lawrence pointed that public



awareness of the risk of eye floaters-related eye diseases were low. Many people thought medical attention was not necessary even if the eye floaters appeared acutely. Floaters are usually formed due to degeneration of a transparent jelly-like substance called vitreous body inside the eyeball. The degeneration results in shrinkage, liquefaction and formation of condensations in the vitreous body. Under light, the condensations cast shadows onto the retina appearing as eye floaters. This is a normal degenerative process. However, acute appearance of eye floaters could also be related to severe eye disease such as retinal detachment, especially when the floaters appear acutely, in large amount, are associated with flashes or peripheral visual field loss. Dr. Lu recommended that people with these symptoms of malignant eye floaters should attend medical attention from eye doctors immediately.

Dr. Lu shared a case of a 55-year-old man who had acute eye floaters and flashes. The patient thought the symptoms would disappear with time and therefore he ignored the symptoms. Five days later, he started to have inferior peripheral visual field loss. However, he did not seek medical attention as he could still see and the central vision was not affected. Three days later, the area of visual field loss increased rapidly and his vision was lost completely. He then sought medical attention at eye doctor and was diagnosed to have retinal detachment requiring major operation. As the retinal detachment had involved the macula (central part of retina), his central vision could not recover completely after the operation. Dr. Lu pointed that, if the patient had sought medical attention earlier at the initial appearance of eye floaters and flashes, at that time the retinal detachment had not developed, he could have been treated with a much simpler laser procedure, and the problem of retinal detachment and need of major operation could have been avoided.

### **70% of respondents are at medium-to-high risk of underlying eye diseases associated with eye floaters**

The survey showed that 70% respondents were at medium-to-high risk of underlying eye diseases associated with eye floaters because the eye floaters appeared acutely, in large amount and they had risk factors of retinal detachment such as high myopia of more than 6 diopters, family history of retinal detachment or eyes rubbing habit. In the survey, more than 60% had eyes rubbing habit, 30% had high myopia and around 25% had habit of doing ocular massage.

Dr. Lu stated that high myopia, family history of retinal detachment and eyes rubbing habit were risk factors for retinal detachment. Eyes rubbing and eyes squeezing could result in retinal thinning, formation of retinal tears and retinal detachment which is a blinding condition. In high myopia, the eyeball becomes long and the retina is thinned, therefore the risk of forming retinal breaks and retinal detachment is high. In these people, retinal detachment may develop without any floaters. Therefore, people with risk factors should attend regular eye examinations by eye doctors.

### **Young generation has particularly low awareness of the importance of eye floaters**

Young generations are also at risk of eye diseases related to eye floaters. The survey showed that more than 30% of respondents under the age of 30s were at high risk, similar to that in the 30–49 age group and lower than that of 45% in the age-group above 50s.

The survey showed that more than 60% of respondents under the age of 30s had eye floaters, and more than 20% had symptoms of malignant eye floaters. However, more than 80% of them did not attend regular eye examinations and 40% thought acute floaters did not require medical attention.

Dr. Lu concluded that many people in Hong Kong had ignored the importance of floaters and the risk of underlying eye diseases, and mistakenly believed acute floaters did not require medical attention. If retinal detachment has developed and involved the macula, central vision may not be able to recover completely after operation. The best strategy to prevent severe eye disease and visual loss is to have regular eye examinations by eye doctors for early detection of disease and early management.

To download high-resolution images, please click on below link :

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1315rsDJPJWk9ZJeC25Z1pImKbmiLPE5f?usp=sharing>

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