Are we taking our eyes of the ball? The adverse impacts of COVID-19 on glaucoma patient outcomes as assessed by POEM

1. Rathin Pujari[1]
2. Geoffrey Chan[1, 2]
3. Ian Tapply[1]
4. Rynda Nitiahpapand[1]
5. Rupert R Bourne[1,3]

[1]Cambridge Eye Research Centre, Department of Ophthalmology, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge University Hospital NHS, Cambridge, UK

[2]Centre for Ophthalmology and Visual Science, The University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia

[3]Vision and Eye Research Institute, School of Medicine, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK.

1. Introduction

Although there has been mortality from COVID-19 pandemic worldwide, the measures taken to reduced mortality have adversely affected the care of chronic conditions in ophthalmology such as glaucoma.

Patients are increasingly concerned about their glaucoma care as patient flow is disrupted with each wave of the pandemic.

We carried out a study using a validated patient experience and outcome measurement tool (POEM) to assess the changes in glaucoma care caused by the pandemic from the perspective of the patient

2. Methods

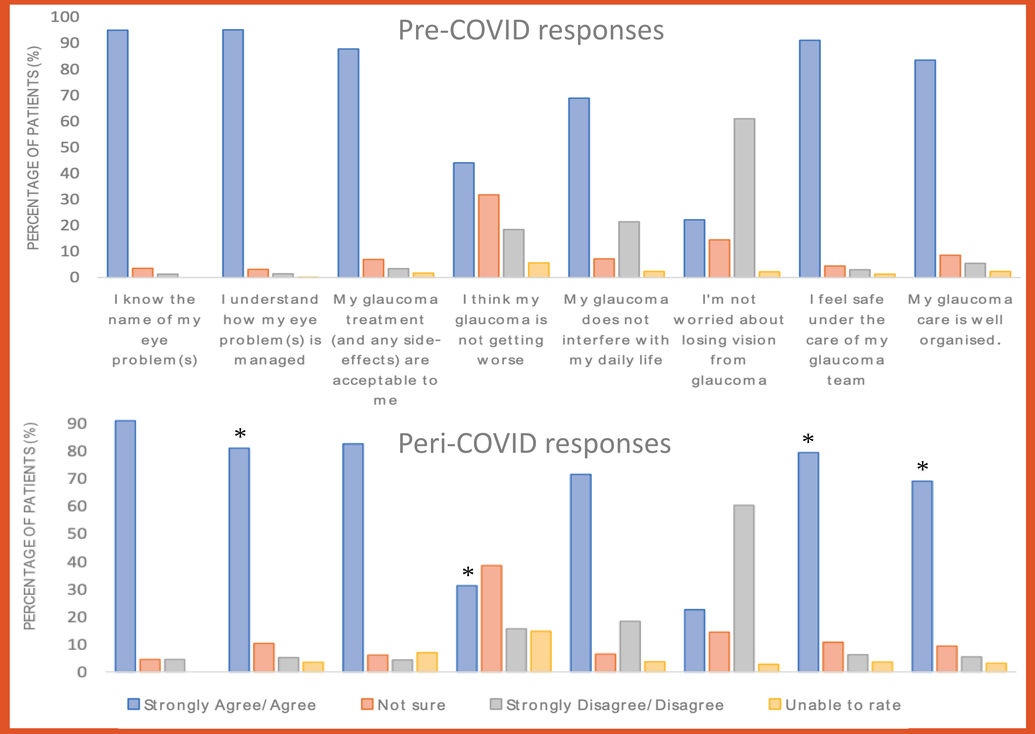
126 consecutive patients attending a tertiary clinic over a 2-week period were surveyed with the Patient Reported Outcome and Experience measure (POEM).

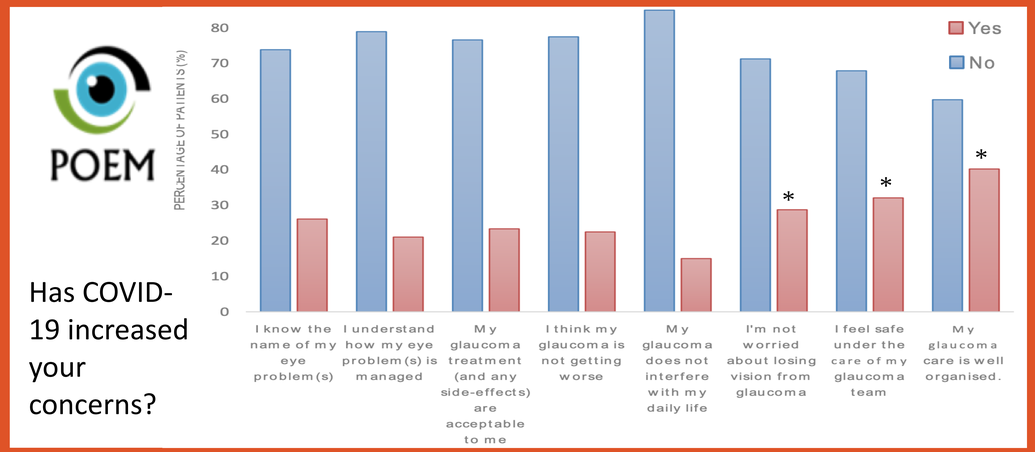
POEM is an 8-item questionnaire that addresses aspects of outcome (acceptability of treatment, fear of blindness, impact on daily life), and aspects of experience (safety, understanding, organization of care).

The questionnaire was modified to determine if each item was more of a concern during the COVID pandemic.

Assessments were performed in September 2020 and results were compared to pre-COVID survey results (n= 780).

The questionnaires were conducted anonymously with no pairing to clinical data or demographics attempted.





3. Results

Survey results showed that the items with the biggest reduction in agreement pertained to the understanding of **how glaucoma is treated** and **patients' perception of their treatment team**.

There was a a 10-15% decrease in agreement for Q2 (I understand how my eye problem is managed), Q4 (I think my glaucoma is not getting worse), Q7 (I feel safe under the care of my glaucoma team) and Q8 (My glaucoma care is well organized) compared to pre COVID-19 questionnaire findings.

Additionally, patients identified Q6 (I'm not worried about losing vision from glaucoma), Q7 (I feel safe under the care of my glaucoma team) and Q8 (My glaucoma care is well organized) as the most common aspects of their glaucoma care that COVID has increased concern over with 28.8%, 32.1% and 40.2% giving 'yes' responses, respectively.

4. Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an increased uncertainty amongst patients about how their glaucoma is managed.

Patients may not feel as safe about their glaucoma care and the heightened anxiety about losing vision are issues which need to be addressed.

These results may imply that patients are suffering a decrease in the vision due to disruption of care.

Increased uncertainty about their treatment and treatment team may be affecting compliance with treatment further leading to increased risk of visual loss.

Further studies investigating the patient experience and outcomes are required to fully elucidate the true psychological and physiological impacts of COVID-19.

Further links

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