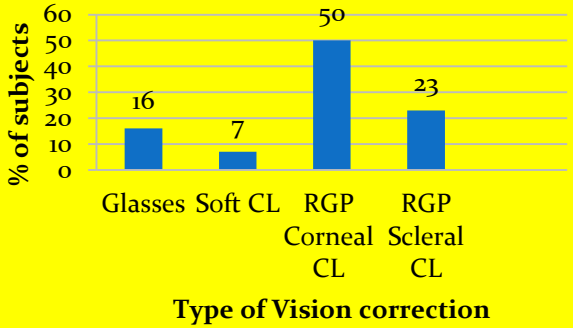
Keratoconus and Associated Health Conditions
Any cause for alarm?

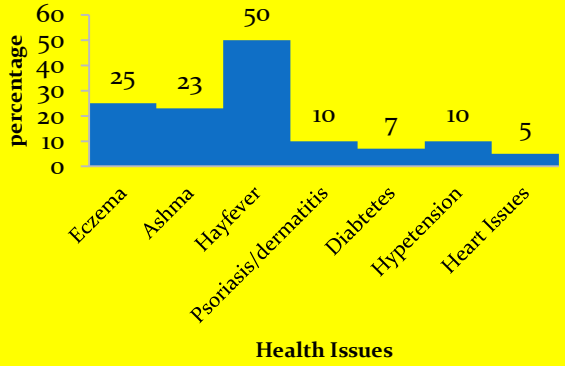
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Background: The aim of the study was to identify the characteristics of keratoconus patients attending a large tertiary referral centre in the United Kingdom using a questionnaire. The authors wished to establish any relationships between keratoconus and mental health attributes such as depression and anxiety with the view of adapting services to improve patient experience.

Vision Correction for keratoconics (figure 1)



Reported health conditions (figure 2)



Methods: A prospective data collection was conducted using a questionnaire designed and registered as an audit with the Clinical Governance department of Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust. The questionnaire was completed by 110 keratoconic patients attending the Contact Lens (CL) Clinics at the Birmingham & Midland Eye Centre, following verbal consent.

Results:

The average age was 38.8±12.8 years, 64% male. The average age at diagnosis was 22.0±6.5 year and 24% had a family member diagnosed with keratoconus.

Two-thirds reported eye rubbing.

Half of the participants wore rigid gas permeable (RGP) contact lenses for vision correction (Figure 1).

Thirty-eight per cent had been cross-linked, of which 56% found this helped.

The highest level of education in this cohort was : GCCE/BTEC 22%, apprenticeship 11%, A levels/higher BTEC 20%, degree in 38% and post degree 8%.

Seventy per cent were licenced to drive and 77% were currently employed, with just 15% on benefits.

Associated health conditions included half reporting hayfever, but non reported a connective tissue disorder (figure 2) .

An important finding in this study was that fourteen per cent had a diagnosed mental health condition, but just 32% were a member of a keratoconic support group.

Conclusion: In this UK sample, RGP corneal lenses is still the main form of refractive correction for keratoconics, being twice as common as RGP scleral lenses. High rates of associated systemic conditions are reported I this keratoconic group; higher than in the general population at this age. Mental health has been diagnosed in one in seven, but

Keratoconic support group membership remains low. This knowledge should aid clinicians in talking with their patients with keratoconus, to guide them to more appropriate support

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