

## Viral Conjunctivitis: An Update

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Covid-19 cases are rising again globally, due to the spread of a new variant that has been named Eris. It is officially known as EG.5.1 and is a variant of Omicron. There is currently no evidence that it is more severe than previous strains. A new strain of Covid-19 has been designated as a variant of interest by the World Health Organization as one that has genetic changes that could increase its transmissibility, virulence, its ability to evade vaccines.

However, it has quickly spread in the UK, China and US among those affected, suggesting it's considerably more infectious than other strains. It is expected to become the most common variant in the UK in about two months. There is currently not much information about the specific symptoms EG.5.1 can cause. However, as it is a strain of Omicron, it could share many of the symptoms.

Recently it was claimed that conjunctivitis could be a symptom of the Omicron variant [1], which highlights an importance of addressing a diagnosis issue in this emerging disease. Patients have been reporting redness in the eyes, itching, soreness, a burning sensation, watery eyes, and swollen lids. The latest review by Binotti W, Hamrah [2] have evidenced also ocular pain, and follicular conjunctivitis. There is a growing body of evidence that SARS-CoV-2 affects anterior surface of the eye, commonly manifesting by viral conjunctivitis [2,3-7] due to direct contact of virus with mucous membrane as a potential route for invasion- *ab externo* [8,9] or due to bloodstream viral transmission - *ab interno*.

Meta-analysis conducted by Al-Namaeh [10] confirms that in adults the most common ocular manifestation is conjunctivitis.

Based on findings of currently presented cases it will be concluded that conjunctivitis has shown different types of manifestation in COVID-19: initially without any sign of viral infection, with its subsequent development [4,5,11-13] or simultaneous presentation with any degree of disease severity [2,14] or a week after being diagnosed with COVID illness [15].

Loffredo., *et al.* [16] based on meta-analysis comparing the findings of Asian and Euro-Mediterranean patients have underscored the high incidence of conjunctivitis in multi-ethnic patients with severe COVID. Researchers concluded that "conjunctivitis may represent a sign of severe COVID-19 infection associated with a poor outcome in Asian and Euro-Mediterranean patients".

Summarizing, the virus is changing, with Omicron variants gradually taking over from others. But we need to remain vigilant and keep a clinical suspicion on all conjunctivitis cases and carefully carry out the screening of patients.

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