

## **Uveitis / Ocular Inflammation during the COVID-19 pandemic**

During July 2020, IOIS circulated a survey on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the practice of ocular inflammation globally. We had more than 140 members responding, from 44 countries in all continents. Situation of the pandemic in each country differed, but at the time of response, 2/3 were mostly on social-distancing measures, with 27% on progressive reopening. Most specialists were hospital-based (54%), with 45% working at an academic center and 31% in private practice. Only 4% had reported to have been so far infected by SARS-Cov2.

On average, number of patients with uveitis / ocular inflammation seen per week per specialist decreased from 43 before the pandemic to 24 during the pandemic. Most specialists (58%) were using telemedicine tools and also assessed them as at least of some use (66%).

Access to uveitis / ocular inflammation care had changed according to 71% of respondents, with delay to specialized care according to 61% and drug shortage reported by 20%, mainly regarding immunomodulatory agents.

Most specialists (54%) did not report a significant change in the rate of local complications of uveitis / ocular inflammation during the pandemic so far, but 36% noticed a small increase. Management strategy for patients with uveitis / ocular inflammation was unchanged for most specialists (56%). Reported management changes of 63 specialists included increased use of local (peri/intraocular) therapy in 48 (76%), avoiding systemic steroids in 22 (35%) or immunomodulatory agents in 20 (32%). Tapering of systemic steroids or of immunomodulatory agent was reported by respectively 26 (41%) and 10 (16%) specialists.

Patients with COVID-19 developing ocular inflammation were noticed by 14% of specialists, who reported mostly conjunctivitis (47%), uveitis (16%, all with posterior uveitis) and scleritis (5%). Other reported ocular findings included retinal changes (26% of all changes, presumably of vascular origin in 16%) and an epiretinal membrane (5.3%).

On the other hand, 30% of specialists had patients with uveitis / ocular inflammation being further infected with SARS-Cov2, overall reporting 150-160 of such cases. Only 10% of those reported a change in the course of uveitis after COVID-19. However, two patients deceased.