

Safety Recommendation for Optometric Practice

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The World Health Organization has declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic requiring a global coordinated effort. There is currently no vaccine available for COVID-19 and symptoms can include fever, flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue and/or shortness of breath.

Infection prevention and control procedures in optometric practice are essential to protect both the optometrist and the patient from infection. With the expanded scope of optometric practice in Jordan, as we are back I start to practice reasonable precautions to minimize the risk of exposure to infection to ensure health and safety of anyone who enters the workplace.

Infection control is concerned with two main areas. Firstly, transmission from person to person, and secondly, transmission via a contaminated object, such as an ophthalmic device or piece of equipment, or via contaminated contact lens solution bottles or multi-dose eye drops that have been used on another patient. In addition, there are environmental hazards that arise from your disposal of waste.

I will share my techniques and hygiene protocols in optometric practice during the COVID-19 pandemic hopefully to be useful for optometrist.

The work environment

- Keep waiting rooms as empty as possible, with preferably at least 2 metres between individuals (Consider social distancing)
- Ask people accompanying patients to wait outside, unless they are essential guardians (e.g. for children)
- patients must wash their hands using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser or hand gel on entering the unit.

- Minimise patient use of pens, and if required, sanitise in front of patient before providing the pen and then after use with an alcohol wipe
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces between each patient for e.g.; slit lamp, phoropter, trial frame, chair, rulers, pupilometers, pen torches and other equipment with an alcohol wipe (best is diluted bleach solution or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol) before use on a patient and after
- Practice selection when trying on frames. I try to select the suitable frame depending on my experiences according to the lens power, patient selection and patient face. Separate the touched frames and clean them with an alcohol wipe or other suitable disinfectant, being careful in your selection as not to damage frame.
- Contact lens training areas should be cleaned and disinfected in-between use by different patient
- Encourage contactless payments over cash
- Discard any item that has come in direct contact with the patient.

Optometrists

- All optometrists and staff shall participate in regular education and training to ensure appropriate infection prevention and control procedures and protocols are followed.
- All optometrists and staff shall practice effective hand washing before and after any physical contact with a patient.
- Hands should be washed with soap and water for a minimum of 15 seconds and thoroughly dried with a fresh cloth, towel or disposable paper towel

- Put on and remove PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) in an order that minimizes self-contamination

Correct order for putting on PPE

- Gown/apron
- Mask/respirator
- Goggles/face shield
- Gloves

Correct order for removing PPE

- Gloves
- Goggles/face shield
- Gown/apron
- Mask/respirator
- Wash hands

Greet patients with a wave

- Whilst taking history and speaking with patient, attempt to remain 2.0m away, so I move my chair, computer and keyboard to achieve this.
- Avoiding touching your face
- Take particular care after touching a patient, to follow hand hygiene before touching keyboard and mouse
- Use slit lamp shields to reduce potential droplet transmission ,I am trying to be silent while examination
- If any respiratory droplets have occurred show particular care in cleaning
- Minimize patient contact time

Patients

- Ask all patients the healthcare questionnaire before appointments (over the phone) repeat healthcare questionnaire on arrival at the practice.
- Consider rescheduling non-essential review appointments
- If a patient reports a serious eye condition that requires urgent or emergency hospital treatment you should direct them to hospital without asking them to come to your practice
- If the patient needs new spectacle, I post it to the patient rather than asking him to come in for collection.
- Advise patients wear masks and disposable gloves

- Remind CL patients to practice hygiene protocol
- As patients enter the practice, ask them to sanitizes their hands with alcohol/direct them to wash their hands.

Other things I do it to minimize physical contact with patients

- I asking patients to remove their spectacles themselves
- I asking contact lens patients to insert and remove their lenses themselves (if possible)
- I asking patients to pull their lower lids down themselves if I am instilling eye drops, or using a tissue between my finger and their lid if I need to pull it down.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 has brought so many challenges , pain ,and suffering to our lives.

Coming together as a community and supporting one another is pivotal in our country success. Accordingly our Jordanian optometric syndicate have a moral and ethical responsibility to care for all patients. It is also a legal and ethical responsibility of health care providers to be knowledgeable about effective techniques to prevent disease transmission.

By my recommendation I hope to help you to continue to run your practice, by adapting it to make it as safe as possible for you, your staff and your patients, and reduce the likelihood of contracting or spreading the virus.

Short Biography: Amani Al Amad is a comprehensive optometrist who specializes in primary vision care, contact lens fitting, problem-focused eye examination, paediatric eye care, and low vision evaluation. She is grateful to be able to change people’s lives each and every day with the gift of sight.

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