

Awareness of Keratoconus and its Relationship with Eye Rubbing Among the General Population in Makkah, Saudi Arabia: A Cross-Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to evaluate the awareness of keratoconus (KC) and its association with eye rubbing among Makkah, Saudi Arabia residents. A cross-sectional study. The study was conducted in Makkah, Saudi Arabia from October to November 2024. This research involved 717 participants aged 18 years and older. Data were gathered through an online self-administered survey and analyzed using SPSS version 26. Participants' understanding of KC (keratoconus) was classified into two levels: poor awareness (scoring below 60%) and good awareness (scoring 60% or higher). Of the participants, only 38.2% had heard of KC, and 23.3% correctly identified it as corneal thinning. Most (64%) acknowledged the harm caused by frequent eye rubbing, but only 13.9% linked it to KC. Visual problems were prevalent (59.3%), with refractive errors being the most common. A significant correlation existed between knowledge level and previous KC diagnosis (p -value=0.003), as well as the use of visual lenses (p -value<0.001). However, knowledge was negatively correlated with age (r =-0.08, p -value=0.019), emphasizing knowledge gaps among older populations. The study also revealed reliance on non-medical sources, such as social media, for information about KC. The results revealed a critical lack of awareness regarding KC and its risk factors in Makkah. Educational initiatives targeting modifiable behaviors, such as eye rubbing, and improving access to accurate medical information are necessary to enhance early diagnosis and management.

Keywords: Awareness; Keratoconus; Relationship; Eye Rubbing; Saudi Arabia

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