

EYE CARE SURVEILLANCE FOR HEALTHY PEOPLE WITH HIV

Microscopic changes in the retinal structure of people living with HIV lead to a concern for their eyesight in the long term.

While antiretroviral treatment (ART) allows for people living with HIV to live full, healthy lives, there may be cause for concern regarding the health of their eyes in the long run.

HIV suppresses our immune system, which makes the body susceptible to several infections, including infections in the eyes. ART prevents infections in people living with HIV, but there is recent evidence that the underlying eye structure of patients with HIV may become disrupted.

Research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal assessed the retinal structure and vision in healthy people living with HIV who were on antiretroviral therapy. The research showed some disruption in the microscopic structure of the retina before visual disturbance was noticed.

“While it is too early to say what the long-term effects of these disruptions may be, there is a concern that the underlying changes in a patient’s retina may be a warning signal for vision loss,” says Dr Alvin Munsamy.



Healthy people living with HIV should have their eyes tested regularly.

The study proposes a point-of-care surveillance guide for eye care practitioners for managing healthy patients living with HIV. By examining the eyes of these patients regularly, practitioners could flag any imminent changes which may lead to visual disabilities. Practitioners should track the

retinal microstructure of patients over time in order to document and flag any changes.

“People living with HIV should have their eyes monitored regularly by an eye care practitioner, even if they do not experience any signs of compromised vision.”



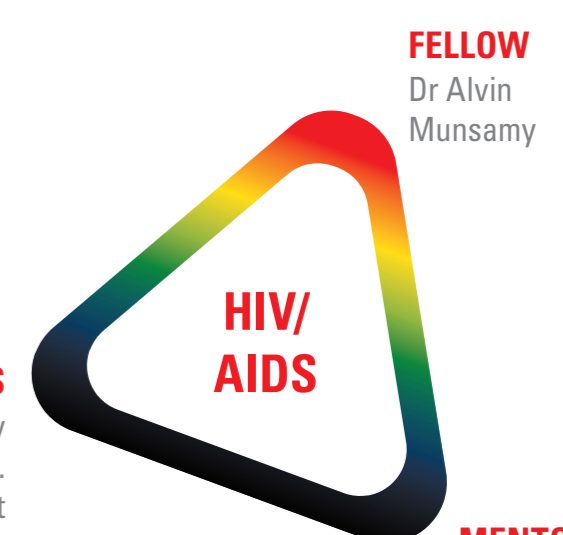
Towards Research Leadership

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