Greeting

Dear Colleagues:

This edition of the newsletter features an article that is particularly apropos before Halloween: the use of costume contact lenses. The article is written by Dr. Lauren Yeager, one of our outstanding pediatric ophthalmologists. It focuses on some of the serious, sight-threatening risks associated with the use of costume contact lenses, and provides clinically relevant information intended to help primary care practitioners on the front lines provide sound, informed management for their patients. As always, we also provide an EyeQ test to challenge your ophthalmic knowledge, as well as updates on the many things that are going on in the Division of Pediatric Ophthalmology at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. Copies of this and prior newsletters, as well as detailed information about our physicians, services, and facilities can also be found on our webpages at www.columbiaeye.org. We want to remain an important resource for both you and your patients.

Costume Contact Lenses

Costume contact lenses, also known as decorative or cosmetic contact lenses, change the appearance of the eye by changing the eye color or pupil shape. Popular costume lenses include black out contacts, cat eyes, and zombie eyes. These lenses are especially popular during Halloween. In the United States it is illegal to sell contact lenses without a prescription from an eye care professional. Despite this, such lenses are commonly found in costume shops, toy stores, and online retail where they are advertised as toys.

Although all contact lens wear has risks, lenses bought illegally over-the-counter and worn without a proper prescription are associated with a higher risk of ophthalmic issues that can lead to injury, infection, and possibly blindness. A 2010 study published in the Journal of Pediatrics indicated that at least 13,500 emergency room cases each year are due to contact lens injuries in children, and anecdotally, many ophthalmologists describe patients who have presented with serious ophthalmic issues from costume lenses.

Ophthalmic complications from costume lenses include corneal abrasions and ulcers, and ulcers, and symptoms include redness, pain, tearing, light sensitivity, and decreased vision. Although abrasions and ulcers may be successfully treated with topical antibiotics drops, they can also progress rapidly, leading to permanent corneal scarring or even blindness. Timely, appropriate treatment is critical. Less serious (continued on page 2)

Left to right - Cat’s eye contact lens and Zombie eye contact lens

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EyeQ Test:  
1. The following are signs of a corneal abrasion except:  
   A. Redness  
   B. Thick, white discharge  
   C. Pain  
   D. Sensitivity to light  
2. Corneal ulcers can lead to:  
   A. Corneal thinning  
   B. Perforation of the cornea  
   C. Corneal scarring  
   D. A and C  
   E. All of the above  
3. True or false: Contact lenses are considered medical devices by the FDA.  
4. True or false: Costume contact lenses are approved by the FDA for over the counter sales.  
5. Which of the following increases the risk of corneal ulcer in contact lens wearers?  
   A. Dry eye  
   B. Decreased corneal sensation  
   C. Sleeping in contact lenses  
   D. All of the above

Costume Contact Lenses  
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complications may include dry eye and superficial punctuate keratopathy (an inflammation of the cornea with punctuate epithelial loss) that are similar but generally less severe than those seen with abrasion or ulceration.

Above - Patient with a severe, vision threatening corneal ulcer.

Most people are unfortunately unaware of the safety risks associated with costume lenses given the marketing and over-the-counter availability. It is important that we educate our patients about proper contact lens wear and the safety hazards associated with these lenses, especially during the Halloween season. If a patient has been wearing contact lenses and complains of eye symptoms, he or she should promptly be seen by an eye care professional.

Division News  
(continued)

Dr. Brooks also has represented Columbia Children’s Health by participating in a Twitter chat hosted by the Lighthouse-Guild on August 29th, discussing the subject of children’s eye health. The chat engaged parents and was endorsed by the Children’s Eye Foundation and the American Academy for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus.