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## Eye Flu Outbreaks in India, Pakistan, and Vietnam: A Potential Threat

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Dear Editor,

I am reaching out to bring attention to the current outbreak of eye flu in India, Pakistan, and Vietnam.<sup>[1]</sup> As a health-care professional with expertise in ophthalmology and direct knowledge of this situation, it is crucial to address this urgent issue through your prestigious platform.

According to recent reports, there has been a notable surge in instances of eye flu, commonly referred to as pink eye or conjunctivitis, in India, Pakistan, and Vietnam since September 2023.

<sup>[1]</sup> This development has sparked a range of problematic issues on both personal and broader scales, including economic and national implications.

Conjunctivitis is characterized by inflammation and swelling of the conjunctival tissue, accompanied by engorgement of the blood vessels, ocular discharge, and pain.<sup>[2]</sup> While the index case is still unknown, eye flu cases of both viral and bacterial etiologies (the former being more common) surged in these countries tracing back to late July and are still seen in a serious number daily. With bacterial conjunctivitis, symptoms, and signs are red eyes, discharge of pus, and pain. With viral, symptoms and signs are watery discharge, red eye, and itching.

It is an indisputable fact, that eye flu is highly contagious, almost all households in specific areas of India had a case or two, and major hospitals reported up to 100 patients per day.<sup>[3]</sup> In Vietnam, the authorities were concerned about the potential for a vicious epidemic. They were dealing with a substantial number of patients, including newborns and children. Unfortunately, 20% of these patients have been presented with severe complications.<sup>[4]</sup> While in Sindh, Pakistan eye flu cases started rising in early September affecting public health immensely.

These developing countries attributed this outbreak to several challenges, including heavy rainfall, flooding, subpar air quality, humid environments, inadequate sanitation, densely populated regions, and unclean conditions to name a few.<sup>[3]</sup>

Some noteworthy obstacles, these countries encountered impacting the economy and public health were difficulty accessing quality healthcare, a lower doctor-to-patient ratio, health-care centers being far away, decreased turnover of employees, and a shortage of eye drops.<sup>[5]</sup> This eye flu outbreak is a global concern for its potential to spread to neighboring countries, antibiotic resistance, and severe complications due to delayed treatment, self-medication, and inappropriate prescription.<sup>[6]</sup>

Interesting questions to be raised are: Are we ready for a potential epidemic? How does this relate to our immunities and the COVID-19 pandemic? Have we become more susceptible to viruses? A healthy debate on these topics awaits.



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