

AEVR DRY EYE DISEASE BRIEFING

On July 20, the AEVR partnered with the Tear Film & Ocular Surface Society (TFOS) to recognize July as Dry Eye Awareness Month, hosting its third *Research Saving Sight, Restoring Vision* Congressional Briefing of 2023, entitled: *A Lifestyle Epidemic: Ocular Surface Disease: Researching the Impact of Cosmetics on Eye Health*.

The Briefing featured international experts in dry eye disease (DED) and dry eye research including:

- David Sullivan, MS, PhD, FARVO, Founder of TFOS, recent past Associate Professor, Department of Ophthalmology, Harvard Medical School and Senior Scientist, Schepens Eye Research Institute
- Kathy Hammitt, Vice President of Medical and Scientific Affairs at Sjögrens Foundation
- Bridgitte Shen Lee, OD, FAAO, FBCLA, FEAOO, Dipl ABO, Founder, Vision Optique & Ocular Aesthetics
- Shane Swatts, OD, Founder, Eastern Virginia Eye Associates and OD Immersion
- Amy Gallant Sullivan, BS, Executive Director TFOS, CEO & Founder, ESSIRI Labs

The briefing began by highlighting that more than forty million Americans are living with dry eye disease and that dry eye disease is the leading cause of patient visits to eye care practitioners. Dry eye disease is estimated to have a \$3.84 billion impact on the US healthcare system and is estimated to exceed \$55 billion annually due to diminished productivity.

Dr. Sullivan then discussed the findings of the latest TFOS Report on dry eye disease which focuses on the impact of cosmetics on eye health. The report details the significant number of ingredients in today's cosmetics that act as allergens, carcinogens, endocrine disrupters, immunosuppressants, irritants, mutagens, toxins, and/or tumor promoters. Additionally, Dr. Sullivan highlighted the impacts of eye makeup ingredients that affect the ocular surface and/or adnexa, including benzalkonium chloride,

chlorphenesin, formaldehyde-releasing compounds, parabens, phenoxyethanol, phthalates, prostaglandin analogues, vitamin A metabolites (retinoids), salicylic acid, and tea tree oil.

The panel discussed the significant impact each can have on eye health. Since cosmetics are largely unregulated in the United States, it was also explained that ingredients can often be significantly in excess of what are considered safe levels for human corneal, conjunctival, and meibomian gland cells which, when negatively impacted, can severely increase the risk and effects of dry eye disease.

Each of the panelists detailed their experiences with DED. Ms. Hammitt shared her experience as a patient with severe dry eye disease and its impact on her quality of life. She discussed how she regularly must utilize eye drops and that due to the severe nature of her dry eye disease, she can no longer form tears to moisten her eyes or develop tears to cry as a person without severe dry eye would be able to do. Dr. Shen Lee and Dr. Swatts noted the significant challenges they see with more patients coming into their offices with dry eye symptoms and they have to explain how cosmetics are playing a significant role in their discomfort. Ms. Sullivan highlighted the importance of regular eye exams and the need to educate eye care practitioners and patients about the medical risks associated with eye products and procedures and emphasized the importance of addressing regulations on cosmetic products. Finally, she stated that more research is needed to determine the effects of cosmetics and procedures on the ocular surface.

Ultimately, the panel concluded with the TFOS Report finding that the widespread nature of these ingredients in cosmetic products — Parabens are included in over 22,000 cosmetic products in the US— is making the use of cosmetics a significant lifestyle challenge. Further, it was found that these products and/or procedures may cause harm and/or procedures may be associated with multiple adverse effects and that they may lead to or exacerbate dry eye disease.

AEVR thanks its partner and sponsoring Member organizations for their support for the briefing:

