2020: The Year in Review for *Ophthalmic Research*

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In ophthalmology, the term 20/20 has an excellent reputation. Yet, the year 2020 was a difficult one, and while ophthalmologists are not necessarily on the front line to fight the pandemic and to treat COVID-19 patients, our specialty was hit especially hard. An analysis of over 2 million patient visits and encounters from 228 hospitals in 40 US states showed that ophthalmology lost 81% of patient volume year-over-year when comparing 2-week volumes in March and April 2020 versus the same period in 2019. During the same period, it also found a 97% reduction in cataract surgery volume – the largest reduction of any surgical procedure – and an 88% reduction in glaucoma procedures.

While ophthalmic pathology may not have been regarded a top priority in the clinical care of COVID-19 patients, it is worth mentioning that it was actually a Chinese ophthalmologist, Li Wenliang (* October 12, 1986, + February 7, 2020), who is known for raising awareness of early COVID-19 infections in Wuhan, China. Dr. Wenliang contracted COVID-19 on January 8, 2020, from a patient who was not known to be infected and died 1 month later.

But there have been vision-related aspects of COVID-19, some of which may have come as a surprise: 2020 may be remembered as the year of ‘quarantine myopia’ [1]. This term was coined by Dr. Caroline Klaver and colleagues commenting on a Chinese prospective cross-sectional study using school-based photoscreenings in 123,535 children aged 6–13 years from 10 elementary schools. The study found that home confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic appeared to be associated with a significant myopic shift [2]. Despite all these difficulties and possibly as a surprise for readers, 2020 was a very good and quite significant year for *Ophthalmic Research*: the journal transitioned to open access, celebrated its 50th anniversary, and received a record number of submissions.

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To advance open science strategy and accommodate the increase in the number and quality of submissions, *Ophthalmic Research* moved to open access due to a com-

Table 1. *Ophthalmic Research* statistics for 2020

Characteristic	Results
Manuscript data	
All manuscript received	421
Research manuscript received	358
Acceptance rate overall, %	25.2
Receipt to first decision without peer review, median, d	8
Receipt to first decision with peer review, median, d	54
2019 journal IF	1.961
Information dissemination data	
View/downloads per year	134,794
Recipients of eToC	989

combination of factors including the field's adoption of the open-access model, the competitors' landscape, and the journal's projection to thrive under an open-access model. In actual fact, the number of open-access articles in ophthalmology has quadrupled since 2010. We anticipate that *Ophthalmic Research* will benefit from greater visibility which could result in a higher impact, from greater degrees of freedom in publishing such as that, for example, page limitations for articles have become obsolete, and from even higher appreciation by authors because their articles will no longer be delayed for issue inclusion. Therefore, from September 1, 2020, new submission to *Ophthalmic Research*, when accepted, started to be under the new open-access license CC BY NC 4.0, and *Ophthalmic Research* has become full open-access starting at the beginning of this year.

How was open access adopted by authors thus far? We have been anxious about the adoption given that, for example, the ARVO journals experienced a decline in submissions when they transitioned to open access: in 2016, submissions to *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science* decreased by 12.6% and to the *Journal of Vision* by 14.0% [3]. Indeed, in the short transition period from September 2020 to January 2021, we observed a slight decrease, but since then a steep increase in submissions. In actual fact, in March 2021, *Ophthalmic Research* has experienced an all-time high in submissions. At the same time, we have observed a further increase of views and downloads. Eventually, we should see the effect in citations. Results of citation studies have suggested that open-access content is cited more often than nonopen-access content [4] and a European Commission report described a 40% citation advantage for open-access articles [5].

Our editorial system, *Manuscript Manager*, continues to serve publishers and societies around the world. *Ophthalmic Research* has now implemented another improvement: the pre-evaluation process. This additional

step in the editorial process enables the editor to assess a submission for suitability in regard to scope/priority before the editorial office checks the submission's adherence to the journal's submission requirements/guidelines. This ensures authors are not required to make any unnecessary efforts before it is clear that it will go into a full peer-review process. We are confident that this will improve author experiences and support our goal to provide timely feedback to our authors.

2020 was also the year of the journal's 50th anniversary. *Ophthalmic Research* was founded in 1970 by O. Hockwin (Bonn, Germany), G. Naumann (Hamburg, Germany), and D.F. Cole (London, UK) and meanwhile has published >2,800 articles. We published a special issue for which I had selected 10 articles from the last 2 decades. Please find our "Best of *Ophthalmic Research*" collection under <https://www.karger.com/Journal/page/best-of/223858>.

Despite the challenges and transitions in 2020, *Ophthalmic Research* received well over 400 submissions (Table 1), an all-time high in its history. The journal has accomplished that without putting a special emphasis on COVID-19-related eye conditions, although such contributions were certainly considered [6]. Correspondingly, the top 3 articles in 2020 in terms of views and Altmetric score (a measure of news and social media attention) were not related to COVID-19, including a methodological advancement of optical coherence tomography [7], a nationwide study on the use of eye care services of diabetic patients in France [8] and a new automated visual acuity test for infants [9].

Ophthalmic Research continues to put an emphasis on clinical trials, basic discovery, early translation, and original clinical research that are relevant for ophthalmology with the ultimate goal to positively impact clinical care and public health. This is reflected by the top 3 articles in terms of Web of Science citations for articles published

between January 2018 and December 2020 that include a review article on optical coherence tomography angiography in glaucoma [10], a review article on the role of steroids in the management of diabetic macular edema [11], and a pilot study on peripheral retinal imaging biomarkers for Alzheimer's disease [12].

These achievements have been due to the outstanding contributions of the authors, the associate editors, and the editorial and international advisory board members as well as an excellent editorial staff involved with the journal every day. We are especially grateful to the peer reviewers who have contributed significantly to the journal's quality. The list of the journal's reviewers in 2020 can be found under: <https://www.karger.com/Article/Abstract/513343>. As a further sign of appreciation to all of our reviewers in 2020 and 2021, the journal offers a discount to the article processing charges for all submissions by those who have reviewed for *Ophthalmic Research* during that time.

I would like to conclude with a reflection on an important activity related to the year 2020 in our discipline, namely VISION 2020. This is a global initiative launched on February 18, 1999, by the World Health Organization

together with >20 international nongovernmental organizations involved in eye care and prevention and management of blindness that comprise the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness with the aim to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020. Quite a lot has been accomplished in the past 2 decades, comprehensively reviewed by the recent Lancet Global Health Commission on Global Eye Health [13]. And yet, the burden of global blindness and vision impairment is set to reach historic levels in the coming years, mostly due to the growing and aging global population [14]. The following, post-pandemic years will require renewed effort and focus on vision advocacy and expanding eye care services worldwide.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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