

Amid the holiday season, we look back at the year 2020 and the impact COVID-19 has had on eye banking, ophthalmology, and the world at large. Initially, donation and transplantation decreased as elective surgeries were cancelled or rescheduled, and uncertainty in donor screening reduced donor tissue availability. As surgical demand began to return, donation continued to experience availability challenges. COVID-19 testing became a part of donor screening to aid in assuring donor suitability.

For eye banks, it was tissue sharing that helped to meet the returning demand. This was particularly the case for specialized tissue forms such as DSAEK and DMET. Physicians made scheduling changes in response to diminished tissue availability, and cornea transplantation gradually returned to previous levels.

As a second surge in hospitalized COVID -19 cases advanced, we received the welcome news of a vaccine becoming a reality. However, months remain before the total effect of vaccination may be realized, and pandemic remains our current circumstance.

Eye banks have learned to respond with fewer resources and to never lose sight of the mission to restore sight. Eye banks and ophthalmologists can appreciate, more today than ever, the need to adjust, to share and to work together to maximize patient services.

As we look forward to the New Year, may it be a year where COVID-19 is not the news but the history, and we are stronger in our knowledge that, working together, we can weather new threats to the delivery of safe high quality ocular tissue for transplantation

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