# Experts raise concerns over growing trend of eye tattooing for cosmetic reasons



Experts have raised concerns about the growing trend of eye tattooing, also known as keratopigmentation, which is promoted by social media influencers. Initially developed for therapeutic purposes to improve the appearance of eyes affected by scarring, aniridia, or other conditions, the procedure is now being sought for cosmetic reasons. This trend has been popularized on platforms like TikTok, where users undergo surgery to permanently change their eye color from shades like brown to blue or green.

The procedure involves a local anesthetic followed by a small cut in the cornea, made with a laser or needle, into which pigments are injected. These pigments mask the natural eye color visible through the cornea. Alex Day, an eye surgeon at Moorfields private eye hospital in London, warns that complications, including vision loss and blindness, can emerge months after the procedure. Although cosmetic keratopigmentation is not offered in the UK, individuals often seek the procedure abroad.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology has also cautioned against keratopigmentation and iris implant surgery, both posing significant risks such as infections, light sensitivity, corneal damage, and inflammation. The organization advises those considering the procedure to carefully weigh these risks.

Jorge Alió, a professor of ophthalmology at Miguel Hernández University in Spain, and president of the upcoming world congress on keratopigmentation, stresses that these surgeries should only be performed by well-trained corneal surgeons, and that not all pigments are safe for injection into the cornea. Alió suggests that while the technique can be disruptive and controversial, cosmetic applications may be viable under strict medical protocols.

In contrast, Day advocates for the use of colored contact lenses as a safer alternative for those looking to change their eye color, provided they are prescribed and dispensed by a qualified practitioner. The world congress on keratopigmentation, set to take place in Spain, aims to establish evidence-based protocols for both therapeutic and cosmetic uses of the procedure.