

TFOS DEWS III Editorial



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THE TEAR FILM & OCULAR SURFACE SOCIETY (TFOS), a nonprofit organization, was created to advance the research, literacy, and educational aspects of the scientific field of the tear film and ocular surface. Since its formation in 2000, TFOS has launched numerous global initiatives. Perhaps the best-known are the TFOS Workshops, especially those related to dry eye disease (DED). DED afflicts hundreds of millions of people worldwide, is a leading cause of patient visits to eye care practitioners, and, if moderate or severe, is associated with significant pain, role limitations, low vitality and poor general health.

To promote increased understanding of DED, TFOS organized the Dry Eye WorkShop (DEWS) in 2005.¹ The goal was to provide an evidence-based critical review of the definition, classification, epidemiology, diagnosis, management, and research techniques of DED. The TFOS DEWS consisted of 58 members from eleven countries and had 7 subcommittees. The publication of the 140-page report in 2007, as noted by the internationally renowned ophthalmologist, Gary Foulks, MD, was a landmark event in the history of our understanding and treatment of dry eye disease. According to a European Medicines Agency official, the TFOS DEWS report was referred to as the dry eye “bible.” Another international expert, Michael Lemp, MD, stated that “The TFOS DEWS report stands as a landmark resource for clinicians and researchers seeking to understand contemporary thinking on virtually all aspects of dry eye disease.”

The impact of the TFOS DEWS report was unprecedented. It helped to promote increased international awareness of external eye diseases, enhance governmental funding for tear film and ocular surface research, stimulate the development of therapeutic drugs and diagnostic devices, and influence the design and conduct of clinical trials of novel treatments for DED. In addition, the number of peer-reviewed DED publications during the following 9-year period doubled that of the previous 10 years.² Given this tremendous increase in knowledge, TFOS launched TFOS DEWS II, which involved 150 experts from 23 countries, 12 subcommittees, and took almost 2.5 years to complete.² The global impact of the nearly 400-page TFOS DEWS II report was even more impactful than the 2007 publication. Some of the updates in this 2017 report included the creation of an evidence-based, single-sentence definition of DED; reclassification of DED with the overarching aim to improve patient care; identification of the core mechanism of DED; recognition that evaporative DED is the most common form of dry eye, and that the major cause is obstructive meibomian gland dysfunction; recognition of the importance of iatrogenic DED; and identification of the best, evidence-based approach for diagnosis and treatment.

The interest in DED continued to increase. During the ensuing 6 years there were more than 8000 peer-reviewed articles published about DED. Given this remarkable amount of research, TFOS launched TFOS DEWS III in November 2023. The mission was to update the recommendations of TFOS DEWS II concerning the subclassification, diagnostic methodology,³ and management and therapy,⁴ of DED. TFOS DEWS III also created a Digest,⁵ in order to highlight new advances in other TFOS DEWS II topics, including epidemiology; sex, gender, and hormones; pathophysiology; tear film; pain and sensation; iatrogenic dry eye; and clinical trials. TFOS DEWS III involved the efforts of 80 experts from 18 countries, who utilized an evidence-based approach and a process of open communication, dialogue and transparency to achieve a global consensus concerning multiple facets of DED. This TFOS DEWS III report will create yet another major landmark in our understanding of this extremely prevalent ocular disease.

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Dedication—TFOS dedicates this TFOS DEWS III report to the late Claes H. Dohlman, Gary N. Foulks, Michael A. Lemp and Juan Murube del Castillo for their pioneering efforts and outstanding achievements in tear film and ocular surface research.

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