



### Florida Lions Eye Bank's COVID-19 Ocular Research

As you may have heard, elective surgeries, which include corneal transplants, have resumed in the State of Florida. As a result, Florida Lions Eye Bank has started receiving requests for corneal tissue and has resumed normal recovery operations. However, this is not business as usual.

Because no one knows whether the COVID-19 virus can be transmitted through a corneal transplant, we have implemented extremely strict donation criteria. This includes ensuring that all donors are tested for the virus and deferring donors that have *any* symptoms of COVID-19 infection, even without a positive test result. The safety of corneal transplant recipients is our priority!

Unfortunately, as we defer more donors than usual due to COVID-19, Florida Lions Eye Bank may face a shortage of transplantable eye tissue for the first time in decades. There is just not enough information to know how this virus affects the human eye, and if this illness can impact corneal transplant recipients. The good news is that Florida Lions Eye Bank is working on answering these questions through medical research.

Today, I am reaching out to you to announce the launch of Florida Lions Eye Bank's COVID-19 Ocular Research Program. Florida Lions Eye Bank is collaborating with medical researchers at the University of Miami specifically interested in studying how COVID-19 affects the eyes and the cornea. Armed with this information, we will ensure the safety of our recipients, while maximizing adequate tissue supply.

As part of this program, Florida Lions Eye Bank is recovering eye tissue from consenting donors who have died of complications of COVID-19. This valuable tissue is being studied in the Florida Lions Eye Bank Ocular Pathology Laboratory and is also being shared with other ocular research facilities at the University of Miami. Florida Lions Eye Bank is currently *the only organization* recovering eye tissue from COVID-19 positive donors in order to learn about the potential for transmission of the virus through corneal transplants.

But in order to do this work and accelerate our results, we need your help! Your donation of any amount to support **Florida Lions Eye Bank's COVID-19 Ocular Research Program** will:

- *Provide supplies and equipment needed to recover tissue from COVID-19+ donors.*
- *Ensure expedited delivery of research specimens to our laboratory facilities.*
- *Purchase the special reagents and stains needed to identify the COVID-19 virus in post-mortem specimens.*

Furthermore, in a gesture of incredible generosity, the Florida Lions Foundation for the Blind has offered to match every contribution that we receive for our COVID-19 Ocular Research Program, up to \$10,000. This means that every dollar you donate will provide two dollars to this groundbreaking effort!

We are confident that, with your help, our researchers will discover critical information about COVID-19 and its effect on donor corneas. With this knowledge, eye banks around the world can adapt their recovery criteria to maximize tissue supply, while ensuring the safety of recipients. Please join Florida Lions Eye Bank, and the Florida Lions Foundation for the Blind, in supporting this research, so that we may continue to *restore the beauty of sight* to all in need.