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Lateral thinking – Interocular symmetry and asymmetry in neurovascular patterning, in health and disease

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ABSTRACT

No biological system or structure is likely to be perfectly symmetrical, or have identical right and left forms. This review explores the evidence for eye and visual pathway asymmetry, in health and in disease, and attempts to provide guidance for those studying the structure and function of the visual system, where recognition of symmetry or asymmetry may be essential.

The principal question with regards to asymmetry is not 'are the eyes the same?', for some degree of asymmetry is pervasive, but 'when are they importantly different?'. Knowing if right and left eyes are 'importantly different' could have significant consequences for deciding whether right or left eyes are included in an analysis or for examining the association between a phenotype and ocular parameter. The presence of significant asymmetry would also have important implications for the design of normative databases of retinal and optic nerve metrics.

In this review, we highlight not only the universal presence of asymmetry, but provide evidence that some elements of the visual system are inherently more asymmetric than others, pointing to the need for improved normative data to explain sources of asymmetry and their impact on determining associations with genetic, environmental or health-related factors and ultimately in clinical practice.

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List of abbreviations

ALKB	alkylated DNA repair protein B	MRI	magnetic resonance imaging
ARMD	age-related macular degeneration	MS	multiple sclerosis
AVR	arteriole-to-venule ratio	OCT	optical coherence tomography
BMO	Bruch's membrane opening	Oep	one-eyed pinhead
BMP	bone morphogenetic protein	ONSD	optic nerve sheath diameter
BOLD-MRI	blood oxygenation level dependent magnetic resonance imaging	OTX	orthodenticle homeobox
CCA	common carotid artery	Pax	paired box protein
CI	confidence interval	PCA	posterior cerebral artery
cpRNFL	circumpapillary retinal nerve fibre layer	Pitx	paired-like homeodomain transcription factor
CRAE	central retinal arteriolar equivalent	PPAA	posterior pole asymmetry analysis
CRVE	central retinal venular equivalent	Ptdsr	phosphatidylserine receptor
CNV	choroidal neovascular membrane	RAPD	relative afferent pupillary defect
CT	computed tomography	RGC	retinal ganglion cell
Cyc	cyclops	RNFL	retinal nerve fibre layer
DOA	Autosomal dominant optic atrophy	RP	retinitis pigmentosa
ENU	N-ethyl-N-nitrosourea	RRD	rhegmatogenous retinal detachment
GA	geographic atrophy	SD-OCT	spectral-domain optical coherence tomography
GCC	ganglion cell complex	SLO	scanning laser ophthalmoscope
GCL	ganglion cell layer	Sox	SRY-Box transcription factor
GC-IPL	ganglion cell and inner plexiform layer	TBX	T-box transcription factor
HRT	Heidelberg Retina Tomograph	TCD	transcranial Doppler ultrasonography
ICA	internal carotid artery	TD-OCT	time-domain optical coherence tomography
ICC	intraclass correlation coefficient	TGFβ	transforming growth factor β
INL	inner nuclear layer	TMX	thioredoxin-related transmembrane protein
IOP	intraocular pressure	USH2A	usherin gene
LGN	lateral geniculate nucleus	VAMPIRE	vessel assessment and measurement platform for images of the retina
LHON	Leber hereditary optic neuropathy	WMH	white matter hyperintensities
		Wnt	wingless-related integration site

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