MAILBOX

Intraocular lens implants and risk of endophthalmitis

EDITOR,—We would like to comment on the paper by Bainbridge et al.1

The aim of their study was to investigate the possible association between the use of three-piece foldable silicone polypropylene intraocular lenses and increased risk of endophthalmitis and indeed the investigators have met this goal and proved this association in an elegant study.

In addition, the authors have supplied the reader in their article with very important information (Table 1) that was not discussed. All of the seven cases had a medical history of one or more systematic diseases that may affect the immunological conditions of the patients and contribute to the development of postoperative endophthalmitis.2 In fact, one patient with plastic anaemia was excluded from the statistical analysis.

Comparing the patients with endophthalmitis with control subjects in a random fashion, even in small series, may reveal additional risk factors such as medical history. The addition of a controlled group of patients undergoing the same surgery who did not develop endophthalmitis could add a lot to the strength of the study.

We believe that endophthalmitis develops when several risk factors are present. We are obliged to take all these factors into consideration before, during, and after surgical procedure, especially in debilitated and immunosuppressed patients. In this kind of patient prophylactic considerations must be borne in mind, including adequate preparation of the patient and surgical field, antibiotics, experienced surgeon, safer instruments, and IOLs.

HANNA J GARZOZI
Afula, Israel
ALON HARRIS
Indianapolis, USA

Pupillary abnormality

EDITOR,—In a recent issue of the BJO, we had the opportunity to read the interesting case report on pupillary abnormality, by Malla.1

The author reported a gross persistent pupillary membrane (PPM) in both eyes of a 33 year old Nepalese female. The patient was asymptomatic and near as well as distant visual acuity were normal. Although the author mentioned that the membrane bulged forward into the anterior chamber when the pupil constricted to light, it was not clear if the patient noticed any decrease in vision with bright sunlight and if the author attempted to record the visual acuity in simulated conditions (by shining the light of an indirect ophthalmoscope into the eye at an angle of 45° or after instillation of 2% pilocarpine eye drops).

We have recently reported a case of persistent pupillary membrane in both eyes of an 8 year old male child.3 The brownish membranes were detected by a school teacher. The child confirmed the presence of poor vision in bright sunlight after a precise questionnaire concerning this symptom. The visual acuity in our case under ordinary room illumination was 20/40 in both eyes. Nevertheless, when measured while the light of the indirect ophthalmoscope was shone into his eyes at an angle of 45°, visual acuity was surprisingly reduced to 20/100 in both eyes. Similarly, Kumar et al.4 also reported two cases (aged 15 and 17 years) of hyperplastic pupillary membrane presenting with marked decrease of visual acuity in bright sunlight. In the latter case, these authors recorded a reduction in visual acuity from 20/40 to 20/200 after instillation of pilocarpine eye drops or projecting the indirect ophthalmoscope light at a 30° angle.

It is widely accepted that asymptomatic cases of PPM usually don’t require excision beyond the sensitive period of ambyopia.3 Nevertheless, some cases presenting with significant visual loss in bright sunlight required surgical5 or Nd:YAG laser6 intervention. Besides visual acuity concerns, cosmetic and ocular disfigurement caused by PPM may also be considered as a reason for intervention in some patients.

SURESH K PANDLEY
Center for Research on Ocular Therapeutics and Bioderics, Storm Eye Institute, MUSC, Charleston, SC 29425, USA

LILIANA WERNER
Center for Research on Ocular Therapeutics and Bioderics

AMOD GUPTA
Department of Ophthalmology, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh-160012, India

DAVID J APPLE
Center for Research on Ocular Therapeutics and Bioderics

Correspondence to: Dr Pandey


Reply

EDITOR,—I have just reviewed the patient with the bilateral persistent pupillary membrane. Visual acuity both for distance and near remained unchanged (6/60 partly and N5 in each eye) with pupils constricted by shining the light of an indirect ophthalmoscope at an angle of 45°. The patient has no visual complaints and is unaware of any decrease in vision in bright light.

K S MALLA
Ga2-696, Bagh Bazar, Kathmandu 2, Nepal

“Cyclodiode”

EDITOR,—I read with considerable interest the paper by Spencer and Vernon7 on the results of a standard protocol for transscleral diode laser cyclophotocoagulation (“cyclodiode”). The particular importance of this paper lies with regard to more widespread use of this therapy in the high percentage (64%) of treated eyes with pretreatment Snellen acuity, and while a third of these eyes lost 2 or more lines of Snellen acuity, it appears in these cases, not directly attributable to the cyclodiode treatment, with particular note being made of the low rate of cystoid macula oedema.8

The authors report success rates in achieving IOP control with a standard protocol, but, as in most other published series, record findings after “repeat as necessary” treatments (in this study up to five in number). While this is of obvious interest to clinicians, it may be of almost equal utility to know the effect of a single treatment. In an earlier paper, also using a standardised treatment protocol for cyclo-diode treatment,9 an attempt was made to eluci-date any dose-effect relation from single cyclodiode treatment session. With a single treatment totalling 90 J through 360°, a mean lowering of IOP of 48% was achieved, but the predictability of outcomes in this series was hampered by the high number of neovascular glaucoma (NVG) cases, which are recognised as having highly variable responses.10 It would seem that Spencer and Vernon are uniquely placed—with their standard protocol and low numbers of NVG cases—to provide data pertaining to any dose-effect relation from a single treatment, information which may be used to enhance the predictability of the procedure for individual patients.

The authors also note that their cohort was largely free of cases having had previous cyclodecrucutive procedures: that is by definition not true, however, of all the retreatment cases, and the authors appear not only to have been reasonably forthright in their pursuit of an IOP <22 mm Hg, but also to have applied the same laser dose irrespective of the number of retreatments, with their retreatment plan leaving no untreated quadrant. In the series noted above, using a half standardised single treatment (45 J over 180°) for cases judged clinically to be at risk of hypotony (which included cases having had previous cyclodecrucutive procedures) a mean IOP reduction of 36% was still achieved.11 It would therefore be of great interest to know whether any cases in Spencer and Vernon’s paper were excluded from retreatment, despite inadequate postoperative IOP control, because of a concern about possible hypotony; similarly, it would be useful to know whether “all corners” were treated in the study—not to have whether there were specific exclusions from standardised cyclodiode treatment because of this perceived risk.

MARK J WALLAND
Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, Melbourne 3002, Australia

Is non-arteritic anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy related to homocysteine?

—We read with interest the paper recently published by Kawasaki et al. They suggested that hyperhomocysteinaemia may have a role in the occurrence of non-arteritic anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy (NAION) in non-diabetic patients younger than 50 years, and raised the question of the frequency of the C677T mutation in this population.

There have been anecdotal reports of thrombotic tendencies in patients with NAION. Although NAION is most probably related to some form of athero-thrombus compromising the posterior ciliary artery circulation at the optic nerve head (so called “disc at risk”), it is also possible that some systemic factors such as hyperhomocysteinaemia and the MTHFR C677T mutation may enhance local athero-thrombosis.

We recently investigated prospectively the presence of hyperhomocysteinaemia and the MTHFR C677T mutation in patients with acute NAION.

Blood samples from 14 newly diagnosed patients with acute NAION presenting to our centre over a 1 year period (May 1998 to May 1999) were evaluated for serum creatinine, total plasma homocysteine levels, as well as the C677T polymorphism in the MTHFR gene. There were 10 men and four women (13 white and one Asian), ranging in age from 28 to 68 years (mean aged 42.8 years). All patients had a disc at risk in the fellow eye. Four patients (28.5%) were heterozygous for the C677T mutation in the MTHFR gene, which does not differ from the frequency reported in the general population. Only one of these five mutation positive patients had bilateral NAION. The mean plasma homocysteine level was within normal range in all 14 patients, as were the creatinine, folate, and B12 levels. Homocysteine levels were not higher in the mutation positive patients than in the mutation negative patients.

Mutation positive and mutation negative patients did not differ with respect to clinical data concerning risk factors for NAION or coexisting vascular disease.

Although this is a small study, these results suggest that homocysteine and the C677T MTHFR polymorphism do not have a role in the occurrence of NAION. Our results are similar to those of Kawasaki et al and the frequency of the MTHFR mutation is not higher than in the general population.

John B Kerrison

Department of Ophthalmology

Nancy J Newman

Departments of Ophthalmology, Neurology, and Neurosurgery

Correspondence to: Dr Nancy J Newman, Neuro-ophthalmology Unit, Emory Eye Center, 1365-B Clifton Rd, NE Atlanta, GA 30322, USA


a window defect type hyperfluorescence in both eyes close to the fovea. The macular burns persisted throughout an 8 month follow up period. The literature describes two cases of unilateral macular damage from laser pointers (class 2 diode, 670 nm, maximum output 1 mW and class 3a diode, maximum output 5 mW), 1 and two other cases of bilateral decreased vision due to large retinal photoagulation scars from class 3a laser pointer. 2

In his review of the safety of laser pointers, Marshall 3 comprehensively described the classification of the lasers according to hazard. However, no small part of the message of his paper—because a letter to the Lancet were unmistakably designed to placate the reader into believing that laser pointers are harmless. After witnessing the persistent injury to our own patient and reading the reports of four others who were likewise hurt by this device, we are appalled. The laser pointer is not an innocent toy. It damages the eye and should not be made freely available to youngsters whatever its strength, while the label of the laser pointer “nothing to fear, just a pointer” is induced in the trainee ophthalmologist to believe that the potential hazards associated with improper use are not as great as those posed by other potentially more dangerous instruments. We recommend that use of laser pointers in public should be controlled and the closing devices should be kept away from children.

DAVID ISRAELI, YAIR HOOD, ORNA GEYER

Carmel Medical Center, 7 Michael Street, Haifa 36442, Israel


BOOK REVIEWS


The fourth edition of this standard text lives up to its enormous reputation. Jack Kanski sets out “to provide the trainee with a systematic and easily assimilated introduction to ophthalmology and a reference and update for the more experienced practitioner”. Undoubtedly these clear and circumscribed aims are well met in this beautifully and even more lavishly illustrated text. In addition to covering all those aspects of ophthalmology and primary care that are detailed in previous editions, a new chapter on ocular trauma has been added in addition to descriptions of some surgical techniques and some pruning of outdated material.

This is and has been an extremely successful primer text for the trainee ophthalmologists and one might ask why this book rather than the many other texts available. Perhaps the answer lies in part in the approach taken with this text which seems to be “patient orientated”: one can almost envisage the author examining the patient presenting to the ophthalmic clinic by starting systematically at the front of the eye and working his way posteriorly towards the orbit and cortex until he finds the source of the patient’s complaints. There is less emphasis on why the patient might have his complaints than on finding out what exactly the problem is and what the patient thinks about it. As such it works very well because it is concise but sufficiently detailed and above all immediately accessible. In fact there is a remarkable amount of detail (see, for instance, the section on corneal dystrophies) while one could debate occasional diagnoses attached to some of the fundus photographs (see, for instance, serpiginous choroiditis). There are also some very helpful line diagrams such as those included in the retina and orbit chapters.

The section on neuro-ophthalmology contains several excellent illustrative radiological scans. Overall this is an excellent starting text. If there is any criticism that can be levelled at this classic text, it is that it leaves this reader thirsting for further information. If a similar effect is induced in the trainee ophthalmologist it will have achieved its aim. I can therefore recommend this book as essential reading.


This is an important and thought provoking book which should be of interest not only to those with the medical profession but also by interested parties such as health economists and government officials whose responsibility it is to set budgets for healthcare programmes. I think it will also be of great interest to the lay public. The practice of medicine is as susceptible to the whims of fashion and pervasive ideology as any other human activity. It is therefore interesting to investigate how these fashions are set and how they have been so successful. Le Fanu has a background in medical and scientific journalism, having spent time on the staff of the Daily Telegraph, one of the UK’s broadsheet newspapers. His thesis is that despite the significant advances in controlling disease, which reached their peak in the post-war years, the promise of modern medicine as we are at the end of the century has failed to materialize. In fact, Le Fanu contends that much of the advances in the first half of the 20th century were accidental or at best serendipitous, citing as examples the discovery of antibiotics, which was never predicted, or the use of chloroquine for rheumatoid arthritis, which was based on serendipitous observations of patients treated for malaria. Even the success of aggressive chemotherapy for childhood cancer was the result of a determined but empirical approach of testing systematically multiple drugs in combination. The same approach has now been shown to be successful in the treatment of AIDS within three or more drugs against a virulent virus.

In contrast, the great promise of the new genetics or the social theory of disease has not held up according to the author. The annoying strident in our knowledge derived from molecular biology led to the rapid acceptance of the possibilities of gene therapy but these have emphatically failed to deliver, despite the intellectual satisfaction that these smart ideas generate. Similarly, in the wake of studies showing a clear epidemiological correlation between smoking and lung cancer the social theory has sought to link almost any disease for which there is not an obvious infectious cause to some lifestyle or nutritional source mostly blamed on Western society. Le Fanu firmly believes that there is little evidence from professionals who inveigled themselves into influential positions—for instance, in the American Medical Association, and with the support of the major drug companies who have altered our lifestyles to the point where the vast majority of healthy individuals are worried more about their health than ever before while being encouraged to ingest drugs such as cholesterol lowering drugs. There is little evidence that they will actually do for the individual what the statistics tell us. Let alone prevent the individual patient from dying of a heart attack. Le Fanu suggests that it would be possible to rectify this situation overnight by closing down all university departments of epidemiology. Ophthalmology has not been immune to these problems (see the revised recommendations concerning laser treatment for diabetic patients with clinically significant macular oedema) 5 and 20/20 vision, Arch Ophthalmol 1999; 117:675).

This book is not a sustained attack on modern medical practice nor is it written purely to debunk all of medicine’s current theories and who then promulgate them in a way that alters people’s lifestyles. In particular, the book has much to say about the dangerous part played by the major pharmaceutical companies in medicine. Many who read this book will be able to relax about their imputed health problems, to feel confident about their ability to ward off much of the supposed hidden dangers which face them out there, and to take much of what they hear from the medical pundits with a pinch of salt. The author offers hope for the future and, in particular, calls for a return of the experienced physician who exercises good clinical judgment, with a dash of common sense.
NOTICES

Community participation in eye health and trachoma and the SAFE strategy
The latest issues of Community Eye Health (nos 31 and 32) discuss community participation in eye health (issue 31) and trachoma and the SAFE strategy (issue 32). For further information please contact Community Eye Health, International Centre for Eye Health, Institute of Ophthalmology, 11–43 Bath Street, London EC1V 9EL. (Tel: (+44) 171 608 6909/6910/6923; fax: (+44) 171 250 3207; eyeresource@ucl.ac.uk) Annual subscription £25. Free to workers in developing countries.

Residents’ Foreign Exchange Programme
Any resident interested in spending a period of up to one month in departments of ophthalmology in the Netherlands, Finland, Ireland, Germany, Denmark, France, Austria, or Portugal should apply to: Mr Robert Acheson, Secretary (for application and further information please contact European Board of Ophthalmology, Institute of Ophthalmology, University College Dublin, 60 Eccles Street, Dublin 7, Ireland).

VIII International Mediterranean Ophthalmological Society
The combined meeting of the VIII Mediterranean Ophthalmological Society and the VIII Michaelis Symposium on Ocular Circulation and Neovascularisation will be held in Jerusalem on 21–26 May 2000. Further details: Secretariat, c/o Unitours Israel Ltd, PO Box 3190, 61051 Tel Aviv, Israel. (Tel: +972-3-5290099; fax: +972-2-6239099; email: meetings@unitours.co.il).

The VIII Michaelis medal and award will be delivered on 24 May 2000 in Jerusalem. The medal and award (£15 000 monetary prize) are sponsored by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and by the Hadassah Hebrew University Hospital and Medical School of Jerusalem, Israel. Nominations are sought from the ophthalmic community at large. Suggestive materials for choice and CV highlights should be sent to Professor David BenEzra, Secretary for the International Nominating Committee, Pediatric Ophthalmology Unit, Hadassah Hebrew University Hospital, PO Box 12000, Jerusalem 91120, Israel.

5th International Vitreoretinal Meeting–IV 2000
The 5th International Vitreoretinal Meeting–IV 2000 will be held in Parma, Italy, on 26–27 May 2000. The main topics will include “Hypotony and glaucoma in vitreoretinal surgery”, “Internal limiting membrane surgery”, “Macula oedema”, “Open globe injuries”, and “Intraocular and subretinal epithelium”. Further details: C. Canuto, MA De Giovanni, or S Tedesco, Scientific Secretary, Institute of Ophthalmology, University of Parma, Via Gramsci 14, 43100 Parma, Italy. (Tel: +39 0521 291016; fax: +39 0521 292358; email: nuzzi@ipruniv.cce.unipr.it).

International Strabismological Association
The International Strabismological Association (ISA) has established fellowships for training in strabismus and paediatric ophthalmology, supported by $US 10 000 each. Further details: Secretary/Treasurer ISA, Derek T Sprung, MD Indiana University School of Medicine, 702 Royal Circle, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202-5175, USA. The last day of application is 15 June 2000. (Tel: 317 274-1214; fax: 317 274-1111).

13th Annual Meeting of German Ophthalmic Surgeons
The 13th annual meeting of German Ophthalmic Surgeons will be held on 15–18 June 2000 at the Meistersingerhalle, Nuremberg, Germany. Further details: MCN Medizinische Congressorganisation Nuremberg AG, Zerzebachshofstrasse 29, D-90478 Nuremberg, Germany. (Tel: +49-911-3931621; fax: +49-911-3931620; email: doerflinger@mcn-nuernberg.de).

XXXIV Nordic Congress of Ophthalmology
The XXXIV Nordic Congress of Ophthalmology will be held in Reykjavik, Iceland, 18–21 June 2000. This meeting celebrates the 100 year anniversary of the Nordic Ophthalmology Conference. Further details: Iceland Incentives Inc, Hamragard 1–3, Is-Kopavogur, Iceland. (Tel: +354 554 1400; fax: +354 554 1472; email: incentiv@stn.is).

III Modern Cataract and Refractive Surgery International Symposium
The III Modern Cataract and Refractive Surgery International Symposium will be held on 15–22 June 2000 at Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. Further details: Clinic FD Roosevelt Hospital, Arm Gen L Svobodu Sq, 1, 975 17 Banská Bystrica, Slovakia (Tel: 00421 88 413 4671; fax: 00421 88 413 2047).

6th Congress of the European Glaucoma Society
The 6th Congress of the European Glaucoma Society, millennium meeting 2000, will take place at the Royal Lancaster Hotel, London, on 26–29 June 2000. Further details: Eurocongres Management BV, Jan van Goyenkade 11, 1075 HP Amsterdam, Netherlands (Tel: +31 20 679 34 11; fax: +31 20 673 73 06; email: egs@eurocongres.com).

British Ophthalmological Photographic Association
Forthcoming meetings of the British Ophthalmological Photographic Association will be held on 4–5 December 2000, in Parma, Italy (Tel: 39 02 480 08471; email: dr2000@mgr.it). The VIII Tuebingen Angiography course ‘00 will be held from 2–4 December 2000 at the Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore. Further details: Secretariat ETHER, Postbus 74, B3000 Leuven, Belgium (Fax: +32 16 33 67 85; email: ETHER@med.kuleuven.ac.be).

Fifth Annual Meeting of the Association for Ocular Pharmacology and Therapeutics
The Fifth Annual Meeting of the Association for Ocular Pharmacology and Therapeutics will be held on 2–5 November 2000 in Birmingham, AL. USA. Further details: COS Secretariat, 11 Third Hospital Avenue, Singapore National Eye Centre 10th Anniversary International Congress
The Singapore National Eye Centre 10th Anniversary International Congress will be held on 2–4 December 2000 at the Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore. Further details: The Organising Secretariat, 11 Third Hospital Avenue, Singapore 168751 (Tel: (65) 22772525; fax: (65) 22772590; internet: www.sncec.com.sg).

The Hong Kong Ophthalmological Symposium '00
The Hong Kong Ophthalmological Symposium '00 will be held 4–5 December 2000, in Hong Kong, China. Further information: Miss Vicki Wong, Room 802, 8/F Hong Kong Academy of Medicine, 99 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong (Tel: +852 2762 0126; Fax: +852 2715 0089; email: cohk@netvigator.com).

VIII Tuebingen Angiography course
The VIII Tuebingen Angiography course with wet lab will take place on 9 September 2000 in the auditorium, University Eye Clinic, Schleisichstrasse 12, 72076 Tuebingen, Germany. Further details: WIT-Wissenstransfer, Universitat Tuebingen (Tel: +49 7071 29 76439; Fax: +49 7071 29 5051; email: witt@uni-tuebingen.de).
Intraocular lens implants and risk of endophthalmitis

HANNA J GARZOZI and ALON HARRIS

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