Randomised controlled trial of corticosteroid regimens in endothelial corneal allograft rejection

Editor,—In the abstract of their paper Hudde et al conclude that “In treatment of graft rejection, additional systemic treatment with 500 mg of methylprednisolone yields no significant benefit over intensive local corticosteroids alone.”

The authors based their statement on the findings that treatment of corneal allograft rejection could not be reversed in three of 19 patients (16%) treated with local steroids alone, while none of 17 failed to reverse when given additional systemic steroid.

Even though the authors reason that the additional steroid therapy may not have been statistically significant because of the small numbers, there is no indication that with larger numbers it might not very well become significant. The authors did not, however, limit their dismissal to a lack of statistical significance of the outcome, but broadened it to the wider summary statement of “no significant benefit”. Their conclusions reflect such a sweeping condemnation. Reversal of the first graft rejection episode without a single failure in 17 patients would certainly constitute a strong clinical argument in favour of additional treatment with systemic steroids.

The authors do themselves admit that the statistical power of the study was such that it would only have been able to detect a difference in outcome of the order of 40%. Do they then reason that a difference in outcome of less than 40% is to be regarded as clinically irrelevant? Why was such an arbitrary statistical straightjacket chosen for this study?

Considering that some adverse effects of the systemic steroid treatment were observed, I regard the outcome of the study of clinical relevance, particularly since an increased cure rate of the first (and possibly successive) rejection episode is also likely to affect the long term outcome of these grafts.

In my opinion, this study does not disprove the efficacy of additional systemic steroid treatment for initial episodes of graft rejection.

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Reply

Editor,—Dr Teichmann is correct in stating that a larger sample size might possibly have demonstrated that graft recipients treated with systemic, in addition to local steroids, have a statistically significant improvement in outcome. However, as stated in the conclusion of the paper, we do not believe that our data are evidence of a major beneficial effect. If there is a small benefit, it is for readers to judge whether it justifies systemic steroid in addition to topical steroid. Weighing up possible benefits with risks, inconvenience, and cost is a decision often encountered throughout therapeutic medicine.

We would make two further points in response. Firstly, in our study the rejection episode was reversed in a much higher proportion of patients than in previously reported studies; the power calculation used in planning the trial was based on these reports. Secondly, our analysis of combined graft survival and rejection-free survival in the two treatment groups (Fig 4 in the paper) took into account the reversal of rejection in all systemic steroid treated patients, yet indicated very similar outcomes (indeed, marginally superior survival in the topical treatment group, not statistically significant) at 24 months from recruitment, when follow up was terminated.

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Indocyanine green guided laser photoacoagulation in patients with occult choroidal neovascularisation

Editor,—I read with interest the paper by Weinberger et al.1 In this pilot study about ICGA guided photoacoagulation of occult choroidal neovascularisation (CNV) in AMD, the authors provide evidence for a beneficial effect on visual prognosis by treating this CNV pattern. However, some reservations should be raised about both inclusion criteria and patients’ selection and then about results.

On ICGA, all eyes included in the study show a choroidal neovascular network, with CNV size smaller than for AMD. The authors do not specify how many hot spots, plaques, or mixed lesions are in their sample. Indications for treatment, visual prognosis, and recurrence rate in these three CNV morphological types are quite different.2

Furthermore, a marked disproportion between eyes with pigment epithelial detachment (PED) (two cases) and those without PED (the remaining 19), reflecting the data provided by Guyer and colleagues in 1000 consecutive eyes,3 characters the examined population. The authors present the final anatomical and visual outcomes by considering all eyes as a single group; this method is questionable, since vascularised PED and RPE are definitely two distinct entities. Occult CNV with PED has a higher frequency of recurrence, probably due to the greater exudative activity of primary PED, and, even if anatomical outcome of laser photocoagulation is satisfactory, the functional result is usually poor. Then the encouraging final visual acuity reported in the paper is probably biased by anomalous sample composition and by improper grouping.

In order to draw definite conclusions and provide guidelines about ICGA guided laser treatment of occult CNV, there is a clear need for a randomised prospective, controlled clinical trial, with a larger population and a more realistic proportion between occult CNV with and without PED, and presenting separate final results for the two patterns with regard to both anatomical and visual variables.

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Phacoemulsification combined with silicone oil removal through posterior capsulorhexis

EDITOR,—We read with interest the report by Fraen et al and noted that our recent article in *Retina* was restricted to studies of the animal model of multiple sclerosis and not that of uveitis. In a paper published in 1997 we demonstrated that ocular specific antigens (S-antigen (arrestin) and interphotoreceptor retinoid binding protein (IRBP)), which are targets for pathogenic autoimmune processes, are expressed in the thymus of certain animals. Furthermore, we found that animals which express S-antigen or IRBP in their thymus are resistant to experimental autoimmune uveoretinitis induced by the corresponding molecule, whereas the absence of thymic expression correlates with susceptibility.

CHARLES E EGWUAGU
PUWAT CHARUKAMNOETKANOK
IGAL GERY
National Eye Institute, NIH, Bethesda, MD, USA

Community participation in eye health and trachoma and the SAFE strategy

The latest issue of *Community Eye Health* (33) discusses provision of services for individuals with refractive errors with an editorial by Hugh R Taylor. 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) (0) 20-7608 6909/6910/6923; fax: (+44) (0) 7250 3207; email: eyesource@ucl.ac.uk. An annual membership to the SAFE strategy costs £25. Free to workers in developing countries.

SUSCEPTIBILITY TO OCULAR AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE

EDITOR,—We read with interest the Newsdesk piece in the March 2000 issue of the *BJO*, commenting on recent studies indicating a conceptual shift in the understanding of the molecular basis of differential susceptibility to organ specific autoimmune diseases. However, we were disappointed that the Newsdesk piece was restricted to studies of the animal model of multiple sclerosis and not that of uveitis.


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 of the Foreign Exchange Committee, European Board of Ophthalmology, Institute of Ophthalmology, University College Dublin, 60 Eccles Street, Dublin 7, Ireland.

DR-2000, International Forum on Diabetic Retinopathy

The International Forum on Diabetic Retinopathy will take place on 7–9 September 2000 at the Palazzo Reale, Naples, Italy. Further details: Francesco Bandello, Congress Secretary, MGR Congressi, Via Servio Tullo, 4, 20123 Milano, Italy (tel: 39 02 430071; fax: 39 02 48008471; email: dr2000@mgir.t).  

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, Schleichstrasse 12, 72076 Tuebingen, Germany. Further details: WIT-Wissenstransfer, Universitat Tubingen (tel: ++49 7071 29 76439; fax: ++49 7071 29 5051; email: wit@uni-tuebingen.de/wit).

30th Cambridge Ophthalmological Symposium

The 30th Cambridge Ophthalmological Symposium entitled “The Ageing Macula” will be held on 13–15 September 2000 at St John’s College Cambridge. Chairman: Professor AT Sharp, Cambridge. Further details: CoS, Secretariat, Cambridge Conferences, The Lawn, 33 Church Street, Great Shelford, Cambridge CB2 5EL (tel: 01223 847464; fax: 01223 847465; email: b.ashworth@easynet.co.uk).

Ophthalmic Anesthesia Society—14th Annual Meeting


European Association for Vision and Eye Research (EVER)

The European Association for Vision and Eye Research (EVER) is meeting on 4–7 October 2000 in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. Further details: Secretariat EVER, Postbus 74, B3000 Leuven, Belgium (fax: +32 16 33 67 85; email: EVER@jmed.kuleuven.ac.be).

Correction

In the April 2000 issue of the BJO there was a subediting error in Table 1 (p 433) of the paper by Frost and Sparrow (2000;84:432–4). The word “operated” should have been removed from lines 4 and 7 in the body of the table. We apologise to the authors and readers for this error.

American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine—Millennium Ultrasound Course Series

A course entitled “Ultrasound Diagnosis and Management of Fetal Growth Abnormalities” will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada, on 3–5 November 2000. Further details: Stacey Bessling, Public Relations Coordinator, AIUM, 14750 Sweitzer Lane, Suite 100, Laurel, MD 20707-5906, USA (tel: 301-498-4100; email: sbessling@aium.org).

Mind’s Eye II—Psyche and Sight Loss

The Society for Psychosomatic Ophthalmology and the British Psycho-Analytical Society present a conference “Mind’s Eye II—Psyche and Sight Loss” on 4 November 2000 at the Institute of Psycho-Analytic, London. Further details: Mandy O’Keefe. 67 Avenue Road, London NW 1 BT (tel: 020 7288 2359; email: okeefe@ukgateway.net).

12th Afro-Asian Congress of Ophthalmology

The 12th Afro-Asian Congress of Ophthalmology (Official Congress for the Afro-Asian Council of Ophthalmology) will be held on 11–15 November 2000 in Guangzhou (Canton), China. The theme is “Advances of ophthalmology and the 21st century.” Further details: Professor Lezheng Wu, Zhongshan Eye Center, SUMS, New Building, Room 919, 54 Xianle Nan Road, Guangzhou 510060, PR China (tel: +86-20-8760 2402; fax: +86-20-8773 3370; email: hwiucz@gzsums.edu.cn).

Singapore National Eye Centre 10th Anniversary International Congress

The Singapore National Eye Centre 10th Anniversary International Congress will be held in conjunction with 3rd World Eye Surgeons Society International Meeting on 2–4 December 2000 at the Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore. Further details: The Organising Secretariat, 11 Third Hospital Avenue, Singapore 168751 (tel: (65) 2277255; fax: (65) 2277290; internet: www.snecc.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) 2761 9126; fax: (852) 2715 0089; email: cohk@netvigator.com).

American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine—Millennium Ultrasound Course Series

A course entitled “Obstetrical Ultrasound” will be held in Marina del Rey, CA, on 12–14 January 2001. Further details: Stacey Bessling, Public Relations Coordinator, AIUM, 14750 Sweitzer Lane, Suite 100, Laurel, MD 20707-5906, USA (tel: 301-498-4100; email: sbessling@aium.org).

Optometry Study Tour to Kenya, Tanzania, and Zanzibar

The tour offers a wonderful opportunity to optometrists and ophthalmologists to examine eye care in East Africa. It will take place from 28 January to 10 February 2001. Further details: Master Travel, Croxted, 288 Croxted Road, London SE24 9BY (tel: 0208 678 3320; fax: 0208 744 2712; email: tours@mastertravel.co.uk).

First International Congress on Non-Penetrating Glaucoma Surgery

The First International Congress on Non-Penetrating Glaucoma Surgery will take place in Lausanne, Switzerland on 1–2 February 2001. Further details: Dr Tarek Shaarawy, Organising Committee, University of Lausanne, Hospital Ophthalmique Jules Gonin, Avenue de France 15, 1004 Lausanne, Switzerland (tel: 41 21 626 81 11; fax: 41 21 626 88 88; website: www.glaucoma-lausanne.org).

Call for papers—6th European Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care, 29–31 March 2001, Bologna, Italy

Further details: BMA/BMJ Conference Unit, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP, UK (tel: +44 (0) 20 7383 6869; email: quality@bma.org.uk; website: www.quality.bmjgp.com).

American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine—Millennium Ultrasound Course Series

A course entitled “Obstetrical and Gynecological Ultrasound” will be held in New York City, NY, on 24–26 August 2001. Further details: Stacey Bessling, Public Relations Coordinator, AIUM, 14750 Sweitzer Lane, Suite 100, Laurel, MD 20707-5906, USA (tel: 301-498-4100; email: sbessling@aium.org).
Age related macular disease

MARGARET EWART

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