MAILBOX

Comparative study of intraoperative mitomycin C and β irradiation in pterygium surgery

EDITOR.—We read with interest the study that compared intraoperative mitomycin C with β irradiation in primary pterygium surgery. The authors rightly commented that long term complications of β irradiation, such as scleral necrosis, may arise more than 10 years after the irradiation. Longer follow ups are necessary to study such complications.

We performed primary pterygium excision with intraoperative β irradiation in one eye of six patients between 1988 and 1990. A dose of 1000 rad of β irradiation was applied to the scleral bed intraoperatively and 1 week later. The patients were recently reviewed in our clinic for recurrence and complications. We also performed ultrasound biomicroscopic examination (UBM) for both eyes in each patient, looking for corneal and scleral thinning. Corneal thinness was arbitrarily measured 0.5 mm anterior to the scleral spur at the 12, 3, 6, and 9 o’clock positions of each eye, while the scleral thickness was measured 2 mm posterior to the scleral spur at the same positions.

Mean follow up was 138.0 months. Mean age at time of surgery was 37.5 years (range 32–45 years). All six eyes were right eyes with nasal pterygia in male patients. No recurrence was found, using the same definition. There was neither significant deterioration in visual acuity nor increase in intraocular pressure in any eye. There were no signs of inflammation. There were no significant differences in the scleral and corneal thickness between the treated nasal position of the operated eye (mean scleral 0.617 (SD 0.112) mm; mean corneal 0.656 (0.076) mm) and the control nasal position of the fellow eye (mean scleral 0.611 (0.030) mm; mean corneal 0.645 (0.044) mm).

Furthermore, there were no significant differences in the mean scleral and corneal thickness between the operated eye (scleral 0.590 (0.077) mm; corneal 0.635 (0.067) mm) and the fellow eye (scleral 0.590 (0.059) mm; corneal 0.624 (0.054) mm). The mean scleral and corneal thicknesses were calculated by averaging the scleral or corneal thickness at the four measured positions in each eye.

It appears that β irradiation is safe, even in the long term. We believe these additional data could supplement the findings by Amano et al.

Financial and proprietary interest: Nil.
Financial support: Nil.

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Sclerotomy complications following pars plana vitrectomy

EDITOR.—The work of West and Gregor again points out the importance of sclerotomy complications following pars plana vitrectomy. They demonstrate that, even in the hands of a skilful and experienced surgeon, vitreous haemorrhage after vitrectomy for diabetic retinopathy is common and requires vitreous cavity washout (VCWO) in 12% of cases. In their series, over half of the eyes had detectable fibrovascular ingrowth (FVI) as the cause of the haemorrhage.

Interestingly, in this case series of 159 eyes, no occurrences of anterior hyaloid fibrovascular proliferation (AHFP) were noted. Definition of the relation between these two entities has been controversial, to say the least. Part of the controversy is due to a misunderstanding of the nature and pathogenesis of FVI. As McLeod points out in his editorial, FVI is a term that has been used inadvisedly, suggesting that epithelial tissue grows into the eye through the sclerotomy incision. While epithelial tissue, scleral fibroblasts, and ciliary epithelium all contribute, the majority of the fibroproliferative healing of a sclerotomy originates from the uvea of the ciliary body.

In normal wound healing, early fibrovascular proliferation in the incision is followed by its involution and contraction, with the result being the small scar seen at the internal aspect of a healed sclerotomy. Inevitably, because of the proximity of the vitreous base and anterior hyaloid, vitreous strands are adherent to the wound and fibrous tissue extends a short way into the vitreous body. This tissue may contain blood vessels, even with normal healing. From this perspective, all sclerotomy wounds heal with fibrovascular ingrowth. That is, ingestion of tissue from the eye wall extends into the vitreous cavity. Fortunately, only in unusual circumstances does this process become exaggerated and result in what clinicians have termed FVI with its concomitant intraocular mischief.


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McLeod pointed out that ischaemia is an important factor in inducing FVI and that it is seen mainly following vitrectomy for ischaemic retinopathies. I agree that this is the case if one includes anterior proliferative vitreoretinopathy (APVR) in this group. Patients with APVR who have had previous vitrectomy frequently have an excessive amount of fibrovascular scarring from their sclerotomies, which significantly affects the pathological anatomy of the basal vitreous and its environs. These patients, however, often have had extensive scleral buckling and cryopexy, processes which undoubtedly induce some anterior ischaemia in themselves.

In the series of West and Gregor, no patient was found to have a retinal detachment ultrasonographically or at the time of VCWO. In the original description of AHFP, most of the patients had retinal detachments that had required scleral buckling. Since retinal detachment and scleral buckling exacerbate anterior ischaemia, it is likely that AHFP, which is fibrovascular proliferation into the vitreous base from the retina and ciliary body, is induced by an ischaemic drive similar to that in APVR. The two entities exist on a continuum. When there is a surgical injury such as a sclerotomy, with disruption of tissue and inoculation of blood into the surrounding vitreous, excessive proliferation may occur with less induction than that which causes AHFP.

Personally, although I have observed cases of AHFP without having previous vitrectomy, I have never seen a case of post-vitrectomy AHFP without some concurrent FVI.

Finally, I’d like to make two other points. The first is that West and Gregor used clinical criteria to determine whether or not FVI was present; they did not use the required vascular haemorrhage. I have observed vitreous haemorrhage in a necropsy eye from what grossly appeared to be a normally healed sclerotomy wound. Microscopically, that white scar contained numerous capillaries that were the source of the haemorrhage. Therefore, it may be that some of their non-FVI patients might actually have had vitreous haemorrhage from a vitreous neovessel. Furthermore, FVI can evolve with time, becoming less vascular in its appearance. So, the frequency of FVI may be even higher than reported.

Lastly, I agree that episcleral sentinel vessels, externally entering the wound site sometimes, but not always, indicate a possible FVI. These vessels are the result of a high degree of metabolic activity during the healing of sclerotomy wounds and may persist even though wound fibroplasia becomes involutional and clinically unimportant. Similar vessels are seen microscopically in the ciliary body. When present, sentinel vessels should raise our suspicions of FVI, but they do not rule it in, nor does their absence rule it out.

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Corneal transplantation: how successful are we?

EDITOR,—The commentary by Waldock and Cook1 on the survival rates of corneal grafts highlights a number of issues. In particular, they focus on the lack of long-term follow-up data in the UK. The value of such data is clearly evident from the Australian Corneal Graft Register.2 Moreover, in the present climate of cost-cutting and evidence based medicine, the collection of such data has surely become a necessity. Many of the questions raised, whether simply comparing graft survival rates of individual units with national data or investigating more fundamental issues such as HLA matching, visual outcome, or surgeon experience require large amounts of data, properly designed studies, and appropriate statistical analysis—capabilities beyond most individual centres but readily achievable within the NHS. The way forward is a national register which will provide the data for answering the vast numbers of questions from the clinician, surgeon, and patient alike.

As reported elsewhere, the availability of a national data base may go a long way in revealing the answers we seek. Indeed, the audit is already being used for data capture for the Corneal Transplant Follow-up Study II, which aims to resolve the uncertainty surrounding HLA-DR matching for corneal grafts.3 Furthermore, it allows a statistical analysis—which will permit the weighing of factors such as case mix, graft management, and the impact of adverse events. The data collected thus far—2785 patients—suggest strongly that HLA matching may be important in the prevention of graft rejection.4 Postoperative anti-CD3 will be the next important factor to be studied with the data.5 It is clear that much more can be learned from such a well organised, centralised data collection and analysis, for example.

The good news is that just such a system is now in place for all corneal graft surgeons in the UK. The Royal College of Ophthalmologists and UK Transplant have initiated an Ocular Tissue Transplant Audit, which will permit, for the first time, answering the sorts of questions posed by Waldock and Cook.6 Indeed, the audit is already being used for data capture for the Corneal Transplant Follow-up Study II, which aims to resolve the uncertainty surrounding HLA-DR matching for corneal grafts.7

As an experienced surgeon, I believe that the opportunity for all ocular tissue transplants to be recorded and the outcome audited. Indeed one can foresee the day when this will be obligatory, as is the case with solid organs. To record such data with UKT will not only provide surgeons with details of the action, but with an independent confidential analysis of clinical outcomes, which they will increasingly be expected to have available.

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As a physiologist, Loewenfeld has written a book with a thorough foundation in basic science, with comprehensive discussion covering pupillary function across the animal kingdom, not simply restricting the project to humans. Having been inscribed over a near 40 year period, the text has a strong historical perspective, presenting research work in chronological order over a period during which understanding of pupil function has evolved. In striving to be comprehensive Irene Loewenfeld has included papers which may subsequently have been reinterpreted or simply proved incorrect. She has willingly injected a subjective flavour to the book when giving her own interpretation of the work which serves to mark the text readable. This is also true for the bibliography where she includes “reference manager” style comments about the value of many references.

By its nature, such a reference tome can be “dip into”. To assist those who may want rapid access to a subject each section is presented on three levels: a “thumbnail” summary for readers in a hurry, elaboration with historical perspectives for those with more time; plus an additional level with material delving into the background for readers keen to look to the source of understanding.

One section where clinical work may be unable to update is the chapter on glaucoma. Here the text focuses on historical record of the pharmacological influence of drugs upon pupil function and their role in therapeutics. Recent clinical work on pupillometry in glaucomatous optic neuropathy aimed towards developing “pupil perimeter” has not been presented.

However, with this one exception, this text represents the definitive work upon the pupil which all ophthalmologists will find valuable, either as an introduction to the field or as the last word on the subject.

J P DIAMOND

NOTICES

Vision 2020: cataract outcomes
The latest issue of Community Eye Health (35) discusses cataract surgery outcome. 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: eyeresource@ucl.ac.uk). Annual subscription £25. Free to workers in developing countries.

Second Sight
Second Sight, a UK based charity whose aims are to eliminate the backlog of cataract blind in India by the year 2020 and to establish strong links between Indian and British ophthalmologists, will be sending volunteer surgeons to India early in 2001. Details can be found at the charity website www.secondsight.org.uk or by contacting Dr Lucy Mathen (email: lucymathen@yahoo.com).

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, European Board of Ophthalmology, Institute of Ophthalmology, University College Dublin, 60 Eccles Street, Dublin 7, Ireland.

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, Croxdale Mews, 288 Croxdale Road, London SE24 9BY (tel: 0208 678 5320; fax: 0208 674 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, Hopital Ophthalmique Jules Gounin, Avenue de France 15, 1004 Lausanne, Switzerland (tel: 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 9JR, UK (tel: +44 (0) 20 7383 6400; fax: +44 (0) 20 7383 6869; email: quality@bma.org.uk; website: www.quality.bmjgp.com).

Optometry 01
Optometry 01 will take place on 21–23 April 2001 with more than 100 events—lectures and workshops— at the Atrium Gallery, NEC, Birmingham, UK. Further details: tel: 0207 261 9661; email: info@Optometry01.co.uk; website: www.optometry01.co.uk.

14th Annual Meeting of German Ophthalmic Surgeons
The 14th Annual Meeting of German Ophthalmic Surgeons will be held in the Meisteringerhalle, Nurenberg, Germany on 17–20 May 2001. Further details: MCN Medizinische Congress-organisation Nurenberg AG, Zerrabelshofstrasse 29, 90478 Nurenberg, Germany (tel: ++49-911-3931621; fax: ++49-911-3931620; email: doerflinger@mcn-nuernberg.de).

European Association for the Study of Diabetic Eye Complications (EASDEC)
The next meeting of the European Association for the Study of Diabetic Eye Complications (EASDEC) will be held in Paris, France, on 19–20 May 2001. Further details: Colloquium, 12 Rue de la Croix Faubin, 75 557 Paris Cedex 11, France (tel: +33-1-44 64 15 15; fax: +33-1-44 64 15 10; email: s.mundler@colloquium.fr).

American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine—Millennium Ultrasound Course Series
A course entitled “Obstetrical and Gynaecological 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).

4th International Conference on the Adjuvant Therapy of Malignant Melanoma
The 4th International Conference on the adjuvant therapy of malignant melanoma will be held at The Royal College of Physicians, London on 15–16 March 2002. Further details: Conference Secretariat, CCI Ltd, 2 Palmerston Court, Palmerston Way, London SW8 4AJ, UK (tel: +44 (0) 20 7720 0600; fax: +44 (0) 20 7720 7177; email: melanoma@confccm.co.uk; website: www.confccm.co.uk/Melanoma).
Visual field defects after vitrectomy with fluid-air exchange

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*Br J Ophthalmol* 2001 85: 121
doi: 10.1136/bjo.85.1.121a

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