Editorial: Primary optic nerve meningioma

Meningiomas arising from the meningothelial cells surrounding the intraorbital portion of the optic nerve are uncommon. They usually present with loss of vision, optic disc oedema, progressive optic atrophy, and in many cases opticociliary shunt vessels. In the early stages proptosis is often minimal or absent, though it may become apparent later in the disease process. Several series of cases have been reported (Craig and Gogela, 1949; Henderson, 1973 Wright, 1976). They have shown that these tumours occur predominantly in middle-aged women and are rarely encountered in children.

The conflicting report of Karp *et al.* (1974) of 25 cases of primary optic nerve meningioma stated that 40% of their cases occurred in children and young adults below the age of 20 years. A possible cause for this discrepancy is put forward by Cooling and Wright in this issue of the *BJO* (p. 596). They consider that the arachnoid hyperplasia seen in association with glioma can readily be mistaken for a primary optic nerve meningioma. In the case reported a piece of normal nerve remote from a glioma was excised and reported by the histopathologist as a primary optic nerve meningioma based on arachnoid proliferation which included the presence of psammoma bodies. Subsequently the remainder of the optic nerve with similar tissue surrounding a glioma was removed.

The diagnosis of optic nerve meningioma in children can be extremely difficult and should be made with great care. It is particularly dangerous to base this diagnosis on histopathological grounds alone or when the clinical details are rudimentary and the clinical investigative techniques poor or absent. As in so many clinical fields, there is an increasing need for co-operation between the ophthalmologist, who has access to extremely sophisticated methods of investigation, and the histopathologist. There is a need for the latter to play an increasing part in the diagnosis and clinical management of a whole range of puzzling clinical entities.

References

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