LETTERS TO
THE EDITOR

Indocyanine green angiography in choroidal tuberculomas

EDITOR,—An 85 year old white woman presented with progressive asthenia, fever, coughing, and dyspnoea. Chest roentgenogram showed interstitial pulmonary infiltrates and right pleural effusion. Cultures of the bronchoalveolar lavage fluid subsequently confirmed the presence of Mycobacterium tuberculosis.

On admission, best corrected visual acuity was 20/400 in a right amblyopic eye and 20/50 in the left eye. Biomicroscopic examination revealed no sign of anterior or posterior inflammation. Multiple choroidal lesions (Fig 1) were present in both eyes. The choroidal lesions were deep, white-yellowish, with indistinct borders. Fluorescence angiography (FA) revealed early nodular hypofluorescence, and late moderate hyperfluorescence (Fig 2). Indocyanine green (ICG) angiography revealed prolonged hypofluorescence and in the late stage images, moderate delineation of the lesions by a peripheral hyperfluorescent ring (Fig 3).

COMMENT

Ocular tuberculosis may occur by haematogenous spread from a pulmonary focus. Choroidal tuberculomas are rare ophthalmic findings even in miliary tuberculosis.1 Previous reports indicate that these lesions have prolonged hypofluorescence in FA, and late mild hyperfluorescence.1,2

Only one description of ICG angiography in a case with presumed ocular tuberculosis has been reported previously in the literature.1 We found similar angiographic characteristics in our case, which represents, to our knowledge, the first ICG angiography description of multiple choroidal tuberculomas in microbiologically confirmed miliary tuberculosis. Hypofluorescence in ICG images may be due to a masking effect of the choroidal vessels by the overlying granulomas.

Ophthalmic examination may be contributive when disseminated tuberculosis is suspected. In this case ICG angiography, which was performed to assess the choroidal involvement, showed prolonged hypofluorescence.

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Accepted for publication 3 December 1998

Diagnosis of an atypical case of ocular toxoplasmosis using the demonstration of intraocular antibody production and the polymerase chain reaction

EDITOR,—Ocular toxoplasmosis is the most frequent infectious cause of chorioretinal inflammation in immunocompetent individuals.1 Diagnosis is usually made by observing the typical fundus lesion, by detecting the presence of anti-Toxoplasma antibodies in the serum, and by excluding other causes of necrotising fundus lesions.2 In unusual cases, invasive procedures may be required to aid diagnosis.3

CASE REPORT

A 17 year old white male presented complaining of floaters and reduced visual acuity in the left eye. Visual acuity was 6/9 in the left eye, 6/6 in the right. Examination revealed moderate anterior chamber activity, marked vitritis, and an active retinochoroiditis adjacent to an area of old choriotretinal scarring inferonasal to the optic disc. A diagnosis of ocular toxoplasmosis was suspected, and topical and oral steroids, and oral clindamycin were commenced. Peripheral blood anti-Toxoplasma IgG antibodies, measured using the dye test, were positive (16 IU/ml). Despite treatment, the ocular inflammatory signs increased and 5 weeks following initial presentation he developed a confluent area of retinal necrosis in the peripheral retina leading to a superotemporal retinal detachment. This was distinct from the original area of inflammation. The presence of severe vitreous inflammation and peripheral retinal necrosis suggested a unilateral acute retinal necrosis syndrome.3 Three port trans pars plana vitrectomy with perfluorocarbon liquid and fluid/silicone exchange was performed. At vitrectomy, vitreous humour was taken for anti-Toxoplasma and antiviral antibody levels and a retinal biopsy was also obtained. Postoperatively, he was commenced on sulfadiazine, pyrimethamine, and folic acid and continued on oral steroid medication. Levels of IgG, IgA, and IgM were measured in serum and vitreous aspirate at the same time. The Goldmann–Witner coefficient using IgG was greater than 59, using IgA greater than 45, and using IgM greater than 65. This is evidence of intraocular antibody production. Samples were negative for antiviral antibodies. Intraocular Toxoplasma DNA was demonstrated by a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay using primers for the P30 gene. PCR testing for viral DNA was negative. Insufficient material was obtained to attempt to isolate the parasite using tissue culture or animal inoculation. Retinal biopsy demonstrated a mixed inflammatory response without a specific infective agent. The patient subsequently responded to treatment and the intraocular inflammatory signs subsided.


Ocular toxoplasmosis is a common cause of retinochoroiditis, and can usually be diagnosed clinically. Rarely it is possible to obtain vitreous and retinal biopsies to aid diagnosis, but in doubtful cases, it may be appropriate to perform anterior or posterior chamber aspirate to confirm the diagnosis. The absence of Toxoplasma antibodies in serum is of limited use, unless rising titres can be demonstrated, since the incidence of Toxoplasma infection in the general population is high. The demonstration of antibody production within the eye is particularly valuable in the diagnosis of difficult cases. The finding of higher anti-Toxoplasma antibody levels in the aqueous humour than in the serum (the Goldmann-Witmer coefficient) indicates intraocular antibody production. A further investigation which is extremely useful is the demonstration of parasite DNA within ocular fluid by PCR. With PCR a sequence of DNA is amplified from minuscule amounts of DNA making it amenable to direct analysis. De Boer et al used a combination of the demonstration of intraocular antibody production and PCR analysis in the diagnosis of a variety of infectious uveitis cases. In this case we initially made a diagnosis of ocular toxoplasmosis, but the disease progressed clinically and did not respond to treatment. The patient was compliant with prescribed medication, and had no evidence of immunocompromise. Retinal detachment is unusual in ocular toxoplasmosis, but is typical of acute retinal necrosis syndrome, suggesting an alternative diagnosis in this case. We were, however, able to confirm the diagnosis of toxoplasmosis by evidence of intraocular antibody production and by positive PCR amplification.

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Figure 1 Initial large cotton wool spot inferotemporal to right optic disc.

Figure 2 Initial cotton wool spot along the inferotemporal vessel resolving 2 weeks later with appearance of new cotton wool spots superiorly.

Figure 3 Six weeks after initial presentation. Note pale disc with narrowing of the retinal arterioles and an overall reduction in venous calibre and tortuosity.

painless loss of vision to the level of hand movements in the right eye. Fundus examination 6 weeks later revealed a pale optic disc with both generalised and focal narrowing of the retinal arterioles, and an overall reduction in venous calibre and tortuosity (Fig 3). Three months later, at which time the visual acuity remained at hand movements, electroretinography (ERG) was performed to distinguish retinal macular pathology from optic nerve-embarrassment. The right eye exhibited modest reductions in scotopic b-wave amplitudes in response to dim white flash (33%) and to bright white flash (20%) compared with the left eye. Cone b-wave implicit time on 30 Hz flicker testing was only slightly longer in the right eye compared with the left eye (30.5 ms versus 29.5 ms). Oscillatory potential amplitudes were normal in both eyes. These results were interpreted as showing insufficient evidence for ischaemic retinal damage as an explanation for her profound loss of vision. The patient was diagnosed with ischaemic optic neuropathy in the right eye based on clinical findings and the ERG results. Laboratory testing revealed that protein C antigen was 47% and protein S antigen 46% of normal levels. Activated protein C and anti-thrombin levels were normal, and no lupus anticoagulant activity was detected.

COMMENT

This patient, with combined protein C and protein S deficiency, suffered ipsilateral retinal, optic nerve, and cerebral ischaemia within a period of 6 weeks. The rapid changes in the appearance of cotton wool spots over a period of several days, which is not consistent with their natural course in diabetic retinopathy, combined with neurological symptoms prompted us to search for systemic causes of ischaemia, including evaluation for hypercoagulable states. We suggest that new cotton wool spots in a patient free of other signs of vascular retinopathy such as microaneurysms or retinal haemorrhages should raise the spectre of a systemic basis for the ischaemia. As the ERG was not compatible with occlusion of the ophthalmic or central retinal arteries, demonstrating only mild retinal ischaemia, we ascribed the sudden visual loss in the face of diffuse disc pallor to optic nerve ischaemia, perhaps from occlusion of multiple ciliary vessels. Ischaemic optic neuropathy has, to our knowledge, not previously been associated with protein C or protein S deficiency, and expands the spectrum of ophthalmic manifestations of the hypercoagulable state.

Supported, in part, by the Heed Ophthalmic Foundation (Dr Ambati) and an unrestricted grant from Research to Prevent Blindness, Inc, New York, NY (University of Rochester), USA.

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Accepted for publication 9 December 1998
Evaluation of the patient 4 weeks after surgery revealed an improvement of visual acuity in the left eye to the level of 20/25. Visual acuity 6 months after surgery remained at the level of 20/25 with the macular hole closed.

COMMENT

The most common complication of extracapsular methods is a late opacification of the posterior capsule. Surgically opening the posterior capsule has been shown in several studies to increase the incidence of both cystoid macular oedema and retinal detachment.4,6 With the advent of the Nd:YAG laser, the ease of posterior capsulotomy has been greatly simplified. Retinal complications following YAG laser capsulotomy are well documented.7 Winslow and Taylor1 reported one retinal flap, two macular holes, six cases of cystoid macular oedema, and 10 retinal detachments following YAG laser capsulotomy. In this series, macular hole formation occurred 1 and 3 months after capsulotomy while in our case it occurred within 2 weeks.

Over the years, several mechanisms have been proposed to explain the increased incidence of retinal complications following posterior capsulotomy including increased vitreous liquefaction, changes in vitreous composition, acoustic transients, and direct retinal damage. Osterlin10 reported a greater decline in the hyaluronic acid content in vitreous samples from monkey eyes having undergone intracapsular cataract extraction as opposed to extracapsular cataract extraction. He postulated that in the eyes that had undergone intracapsular cataract extraction, hyaluronic acid in the vitreous had diffused anteriorly, resulting in the vitreous instability and subsequent retinal complications. Thus, the intact capsule acts as a diffusion barrier for hyaluronic acid. This concept of a diffusion barrier was again employed by Miyake7 to theorise a role for the posterior capsule in the development of cystoid macular oedema due to iris synthesised prostaglandins.

Significant liquefaction of the vitreous, postulated to be the result of acoustic transients accompanying the laser irradiation, has been documented in monkey and rabbit eyes following Nd:YAG laser irradiation of the posterior capsule.7 Other more direct injuries to the retinal pigment epithelium and subsequent retinal complications. Thus, the intact capsule acts as a diffusion barrier for hyaluronic acid. This concept of a diffusion barrier was again employed by Miyake7 to theorise a role for the posterior capsule in the development of cystoid macular oedema due to iris synthesised prostaglandins.

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intracranial optic nerves were examined to compare the size of the intracranial optic nerve corresponding to the colobomatous eye with that corresponding to the normal eye. Cases 1–3 had no associated systemic or intracranial malformations. Case 4 had Aicardi syndrome with agenesis of the corpus callosum and bilateral grey matter heterotopia. Cases 1–3 had no associated systemic or intracranial malformations involving the optic disc are consistently associated with hypoplasia of the ipsilateral intracranial optic nerve, corresponding to the inferior segmental hypoplasia observed ophthalmoscopically. The nosological overlap between colobomatous derangement of the optic nerve and segmental hypoplasia, which has gone largely unrecognised, reflects the timing of colobomatous dysembryogenesis early in gestation and implicates a primary developmental failure of inferior retinal ganglion cells. MRI of other segmental optic disc malformations (for example, congenital tilted disc syndrome, unilateral high myopia) may disclose similar reductions in intracranial optic nerve size.

Figure 1 (A) Retinochoroidal coloboma incorporating the segmentally hypoplastic right optic disc (open arrows). The major retinal vessels delimit the lower margin of the optic disc. (B) T1 weighted coronal MR image (case 1) demonstrating hypoplasia of the right optic nerve (small arrow). The area of the right optic nerve is approximately half the size of the normal left optic nerve (large arrow).

Figure 2 Coronal T1 weighted magnetic resonance image demonstrating intracranial orbital mass compressing the globe.
 editor.—Transconjunctival needling of trabeculectomy bleb is a relatively safe, simple filtering bleb. A patient was operated on following trabeculectomy bleb needling for a severe de-creased aqueous flow in failed trabeculectomies. We report a severe delayed suprachoroidal haemorrhage occurring secondary to this procedure in an aphakic patient receiving aspirin therapy.

CASE REPORT

Fifteen years previously a 75 year old myopic man underwent bilateral intracapsular cataract extractions. He developed secondary open angle glaucoma but was intolerant of topical β blockers because of bradycardia. He was managed on pilocarpine drops 4% four times daily but control of intraocular pressure (IOP) was inadequate with deterioration in visual fields. Twelve years after the cataract extractions he underwent bilateral trabeculectomies with postoperative 5-fluorouracil. Three years later the left visual acuity was 6/18 with an IOP of 22 mm Hg despite pilocarpine. In view of progressive cupping of the left optic disc in association with this pressure, the patient was offered needling of the left filtering bleb.

The needling was performed at the slit lamp with immediate development of a shallow bleb. The anterior chamber was well maintained with an IOP of 4 mm Hg. Subconjunctivally, 5 μg of 5-fluorouracil was administered and the patient was discharged with topical steroids and antibiotics. When he bent over 7 hours later he experienced sudden pain in his left eye with immediate reduction of vision. He presented for examination the following day when the visual acuity was noted to be hand movements with a left relative afferent papillary defect (RAPD). There was a large subconjunctival haemorrhage, a total hyphaema, and IOP of 7 mm Hg. There was no fundal view but B scan ultrasonography showed vitreous haemorrhage and haemorrhagic choroidal detachments (Fig 1). Further direct questioning revealed that the patient was taking 75 mg of aspirin “for his heart” on his family doctor’s advice.

The patient was managed conservatively with serial ultrasound examinations. Despite initial subjective improvement in vision, the sight remained reduced at hand movements with a persistent RAPD and a soft eye. B scan ultrasound 4 months after needling showed an open funnel retinal detachment (Fig 2) which, in view of the poor visual prognosis, was not felt to be amenable to vitreoretinal surgery.

COMMENT

Delayed suprachoroidal haemorrhage is a well recognised but fortunately rare complication of all forms of intraocular surgery, especially filtering procedures. Pathological study of eyes enucleated within hours of the haemorrhage occurring have suggested the cause to be rupture of necrotic posterior ciliary arteries. A number of risk factors for delayed suprachoroidal haemorrhage have been reported, including aphakia, high myopia, a large peripapillary haemorrhage, a total hyphaema, and ocular discomfort in his left eye. There was no history of trauma.

His ocular history included chronic posterior blepharitis and peripheral corneal ulcers (upper cornea) in the left eye related to acne rosacea. This patient had also had an uneventful cataract surgery in the same eye some 3 years previously and had not been seen in the eye department since. Relevant medical history includes treatment for paroxysmal atrial fibrillation with sotalol. The patient had been taking aspirin in the development or exacerbation of the haemorrhage is unknown but has not been previously reported as a risk factor. This report emphasises that, while needling of trabeculectomy blebs is usually a safe procedure, severe complications may arise and these need to be taken into consideration, especially when managing high risk patients.
warfarin until 2 months before the original presentation. The clinical findings were left eye visual acuity −6/60 (Sn) improving to 6/12p with a pinhole; circumciliary congestion and an area of reddish-brown discoloration (6.0–6.5 mm) inferotemporally on the cornea, clinically resembling corneal blood staining. The intraocular pressure was within normal limits and no other ocular abnormality was detected. The other eye had a visual acuity of 6/6p with pinhole and appeared to be normal. On review, 2 months after initial presentation, he was noted to have shrinkage of the area of discoloration revealing underlying prominent superficial and deep stromal corneal vessels adjacent to the area of discoloration, and some lipid deposition close to the deeply vascularised limbus. On further follow up 5 months later, the patient had retained the same visual acuity of 6/60 (Sn) improving to 6/12p with pinhole. Though the ciliary congestion persisted, the patient was not in any discomfort. The area of discoloration had a greenish-yellow tinge now and measured 5.7–4.2 mm.

COMMENT

Deep intracorneal haemorrhage is most often seen after intraocular surgery, after direct, blunt ocular trauma, and in a vascularised cornea. The contribution of systemic factors such as diabetes or hypertension is unclear. Acne rosacea is known to cause peripheral vascularity especially involving the inferonasal and inferotemporal quadrant. These vessels are known to progress in the absence of acute symptoms. In our patient, the corneal blood staining was a result of direct bleeding into the corneal stroma from the deep stromal vessels. The deep stromal vascularity appears to have developed insidiously as in similar cases reported subsequent to contact lens wear. Corneal blood staining either from persisting hyphaema or deep intracorneal haemorrhage represents deposition of haemoglobin and its breakdown products within the cornea. A histopathological analysis of blood stained corneas, most of which were associated with raised intraocular pressures, indicated a gradient of haemoglobin degradation from the posterior to the anterior corneal stroma, extracellular haemoglobin particles being concentrated more posteriorly while haemosiderin laden keratocytes predominated anteriorly. Animal model experiments in rabbits utilising total persistent hyphaema with sustained increased intraocular pressures have also revealed similar results. Endothelial degeneration accompanies corneal blood staining and keratocytes appear to be actively involved in haemoglobin degradation. Porphyrin induced photosensitivity producing cytotoxic oxygen species within the blood stained cornea have also been considered as contributing to endothelial and keratocyte degeneration. Clearing of blood staining is thought to be a result of the phagocytic action of the keratocytes and from a diffusion of haemoglobin into the conjunctival circulation and the anterior chamber. The pattern of peripheral, posterior, and anterior stromal clearing observed seems consistent with diffusion of haemoglobin breakdown products out of the cornea as the primary mechanism of clearing. In the absence of a hyphaema, therapeutic efforts are directed towards prevention of corneal blood staining—for example, treating the corneal ulcer vigorously, correction of entropion or treatment of systemic hypertension. The presence of deep stromal vascularity secondary to any cause must be watched carefully and managed as a potentially vision threatening complication especially in contact lens wearers. Once intracorneal bleeding has occurred, Giessler et al advise waiting for a spontaneous clearing, although it may take 2 or 3 years or more. In the absence of severe associated pathology, corneal blood staining has been noted to clear without permanent corneal opacity changes. Penetrating keratoplasty may be considered.

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Accepted for publication 8 February 1999