Acute posterior vitreous detachment

EDITOR,—We read Tanner et al’s paper on the predictive value of vitreous pigment (Schaffer’s sign) for retinal breaks in posterior vitreous detachment with great interest. Based on their figures, patients who have a negative Schaffer’s sign had a 1% chance of having a retinal break and a 0.8% chance of having a lesion where prophylaxis was thought to be appropriate. Thus, Schaffer’s sign has a negative predictive value of 99% in their series. They go on to recommend that if vitreous pigment is present then the patient should be referred for urgent vitreoretinal opinion while those with no pigment should be referred on a less urgent basis.

We would like to point these findings in perspective. The incidence of retinal breaks in patients aged 10 years or more who do not have any history of ocular disease is 6–14%.1 Retinal breaks have been found in 33/250 (14.8%) of necropsy eyes with posterior vitreous detachment by Focsi.2 The incidence of retinal detachment is approximately 120 000 per year of the general population per year.3 This suggests that less than 0.2% of people with a retinal break eventually have a detachment of the retina. This value may be higher in patients with a symptomatic posterior vitreous detachment; however, it is reasonable to conclude that only a minority of retinal breaks will go on to cause a retinal detachment. Prophylactic treatment of retinal breaks by laser or cryotherapy is not without complications; also detachments can occur in eyes that have had prophylactic treatment.4 Byer has reported that retinal breaks in unoperated eyes with posterior vitreous detachment that need treatment can be followed up without treatment, with only a minority progressing to retinal detachments.5 We have a case that has a negative predictive value of 99%. We know that only a minority of patients who have a retinal tear or hole actually benefit from prophylactic treatment. Can we still justify referring all patients with a posterior vitreous detachment and no vitreous pigment for a specialist examination or even a follow up examination in the light of this knowledge?

The appropriate recommendation would be that all patients presenting with posterior vitreous detachment, no vitreous pigment, and no retinal tears or holes at initial examination can be safely discharged with an explanation of the warning symptoms which should prompt the patient to reattend.

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Reply

EDITOR,—We thank Gupta and Prasad for their interest and comments on our recent paper.6 We agree that the majority of retinal breaks probably do not progress to cause retinal detachment but suggest caution in the interpretation of data relating to asymptomatic rather than symptomatic tears, the latter having been shown to be associated with subsequent retinal detachment in approximately 30% of cases.7 It is the management of recent onset, symptomatic posterior vitreous detachment (PVD) and associated retinal breaks that we address in our study. The rationale for treating fresh, symptomatic retinal breaks has been reviewed by numerous authors and is best summarised in the recent preferred practice pattern document produced by the American Academy of Ophthalmology.8

The purpose of our study was to provide help to those practitioners seeing large numbers of patients with acute PVD, but who do not feel confident in the use of indention ophthalmoscopy. The presence of vitreous pigment in patients presenting with acute PVD is indeed highly predictive of the presence of a retinal break, but a thorough retinal examination is still necessary.

In our series only one patient represented with a retinal break which had not been identified during initial indentation ophthalmoscopy. We agree that no routine follow up examination is required in most cases, provided a retinal break has been confidently excluded with indentation ophthalmoscopy and the PVD is judged to be complete, but that patients should be warned to reattend if further symptoms occur.

V TANNER
A H CHIGNELL


BOOK REVIEW


Anterior uveitis is an important and common cause of ocular morbidity. Drs BenEzra, Ohno, Secchi, and Ali are among their contributors. Drs De Kozak, Forrester, Caspers-Velu, LeHoang, McCluskey, Okada, and Whitcup provide a comprehensive yet concise summary of this field in their recently released text, which was prepared under the auspices of the International Ocular Inflammation Society. Each of the eight chapters contained in this book are clearly written, well referenced, and accompanied by a number of very nice tables and illustrations, many of which are in full colour. Although no means encyclopaedic, this manual includes excellent overviews of the clinical characteristics of all of the important causes of anterior uveitis, as well as systematic approaches to diagnosis, treatment, and surgery in patients with anterior uveitis.

EMMETT’T CUNNINGHAM, JR
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 Meistersingerhalle, Nuremberg, Germany on 17–20 May 2001. Further details: MCN Medizinische Congress-organisation Nuremberg AG, Zentralstrasse 29, 90478 Nuremberg, Germany (tel: ++49-911-3931621; fax: ++49-911-3931620; email: doierrfingcr@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).

2nd Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Treatment of Autoimmune Disorders 2001

14th World Congress of the International Society for Laser Surgery and Medicine
The 14th World Congress of the International Society for Laser Surgery and Medicine is to be held on the 27–30 August 2001 at Sri Ramachandra Medical College and University Hospital, Chennai, India. The American Society of Lasers in Medicine and Surgery has indicated that it will designate the 14th World Congress of ISLSM as its society's co-sponsoring meeting. A pre-conference course and separate sessions in ophthalmology will be held as a part of this international meeting.

Further details: Dr B Krishna Rau, President, 14th World Congress of the International Society for Laser Surgery and Medicine, Department of Surgery, D2 Ward, Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute, Porur, Chennai - 600 116, India (tel: 91-44-4765956; 476027-28; 852777; 8594804; fax: 91-44-8594578, 4767008; email: krishnar@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in and website: www.medindia.net/islsm2001).

American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine—Millennium Ultrasound Course Series

31st Cambridge Ophthalmological Symposium
The 31st Cambridge Ophthalmological Symposium will be held 3–5 September 2001 at St John’s College Cambridge. The subject is Retinal Detachment. Further details: COS Secretariat, Cambridge Conferences, The Lawn, 3 Church Street, Great Shelford, Cambridge CB2 5EL, UK (tel: 01223 847464; fax: 01223 847465; email: b.ashworth@easynet.co.uk).

1st Asia Pacific Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care
The 1st Asia Pacific Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care will be held from 19–21 September 2001 in Sydney, Australia. Presented by the BMJ Publishing Group (London, UK) and Institute for Healthcare Improvement (Boston, USA), with the support of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care (Australia), Safety and Quality Council (Australia), NSW Health (Australia) and Ministry of Health (New Zealand). Further details: quality@bma.org.uk; fax +44 (0) 7383 0869.

41st St Andrew’s Day Festival Symposium on Therapeutics
The 41st St Andrew’s Day Festival Symposium on Therapeutics will be held on 6–7 December 2001 at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. Further details: Ms Eileen Strawn, Symposium Co-ordinator (tel: 0131 225 7324; fax: 0131 220 4393; email: e.strawn@rcpe.ac.uk; website: www.rcpe.ac.uk).

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, CGI Ltd, 2 Palmerston Court, Palmerston Way, London SW8 4AJ, UK (tel: + 44 (0) 20 7720 0600; fax: + 44 (0) 20 7720 7177; email: melanoma@confcomm.co.uk; website: www.confcomm.co.uk/Melanoma)

International Society for Behçet’s Disease
The International Society for Behçet’s Disease was inaugurated at the 9th International Congress on Behçet’s Disease. Professor Shigeki Ohno represents the ophthalmology division (Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, Hokkaido University Graduate School of Medicine, Sapporo, Japan: tel: +81-11-716-1116 (ext 5944); fax: +81-11-736-0952; email: sohno@med.hokudai.ac.jp).

The 10th International Congress on Behçet’s Disease will be held in Berlin 27–29 June 2002. Further details: Professor Ch Zouboulis (email: zoubbere@zedat.fu-berlin.de).

CORRECTION

In the paper published in the February issue of the BJO (2001;85:173–8) by Newsom et al, there was an error in Figure 4 (p 176). The axes are wrongly labelled. The y axis should read Post-TTa VA and the x axis should be Pre-PTT VA. We apologise for the error.