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 tear, a whole 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 put 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%. Retinal breaks have been found in 37/250 (14.8%) of necropsy eyes with posterior vitreous detachment by Foos. The incidence of retinal detachment is approximately 12/100 000 of the general population per year. This suggests that less than 0.2% 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. 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.

We have a test 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 retinal break without treatment, with only a minority progressing to retinal detachments? Prophylactic treatment by laser or cryotherapy is not without complications; also detachments can occur in eyes that have had prophylactic treatment. 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.

---

**Reply**

**Editor,—** We thank Gupta and Prasad for their interest and comments on our recent paper. 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. It is the management of recent onset, symptomatic posterior vitreous detachment (PVD) and associated retinal breaks that we addressed 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.

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 indentation 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 presented 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 CHIGNEILL**

---

**BOOK REVIEW**


Anterior uveitis is an important and common cause of ocular morbidity. Drs Ben Ezra, Ohno, Secchi, and Ali, along with their contributors, Drs De Kozak, Forrest, Caspers-Velu, Le Hoang, 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 by 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

---

**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 E21V 9EL. Tel: (+44) (0) 20-7608 6909/6910/6923; fax: (+44) (0) 7259 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 at www.second-sight.org.uk or by contacting Dr Lucy Mathen (email address lucymathen@yahoo.com).

**Office of Continuing Medical Education**

A symposium “Randomised trials in ophthalmology: past, present, future” will be held 2–3 April 2001 at the Thomas B Turner Building, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. Further details: Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Office of Continuing Medical Education, Turner 20, 720 Rutland Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21205-2195, USA (tel: (410) 955-2959; fax: (410) 955-0807; email: cmnet@jhmi.edu).

**XXV Detachment Course**

The XXV Detachment course, retinal and vitreous surgery, will be held in Poznan, Poland on 5–6 April 2001. Further details: Professor Krystyna Pecold, Katedra I Klinika Okulistyki, ul Dluga 1/2, 61–848 Poznan, Poland (tel/fax: 004861-8527619) or Professor Ingrid Kreissig, Univ-Augenklinik, Schleichastrasse 12, D-72076 Tuebingen, Germany (fax: 49-7071-293746; email: ingrid.kreissig@uni-tuebingen.de).
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, Zartheimstrasse 29, 90478 Nuremberg, 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@collouqium.fr).

2nd Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Treatment of Autoimmune Disorders 2001
The 2nd Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Treatment of Autoimmune Disorders 2001 will take place on 7–9 June 2001 at the University of Kiel, Schittenhelmstrasse 7, D-24105 Kiel, Germany. Further details: Prof Dr Med Michael Sticherling, Department of Dermatology, University of Kiel, Schittenhelmstrasse 7, D-24105 Kiel, Germany (tel: +49-431 597 1512; fax: +49-431 597 1611; email: msticherling@dermatology.uni-kiel.de).

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 in New York City, NY, on 24–26 August 2001. Further details: Stacey Blessing, Public Relations Coordinator, AIUM, 14750 Sweitzer Lane, Suite 100, Laurel, MD 20707-5906, USA (tel: 301-498-4100; email: sbessling@aium.org).

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, from 24–26 August 2001. Further details: COS Secretariat, Cambridge Conference, The Lawn, 33 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@bmj.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, CCI Ltd, 2 Palmerston Court, Palmerston Way, London SW8 4AJ, UK (tel: + 44 (0) 20 7720 0660; fax: + 44 (0) 20 7720 7177; email: melanoma@confcom.co.uk: website: www.confcom.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 Shigeaki Ohno represents the ophthalmology division (Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, Hokkaido University Graduate School of Medicine, Sapporo, Japan: tel: +81-11-716-1161 (ext 5944); fax: +81-11-736-0952; email: sohno@med.hokudai.ac.jp). The 10th International Congress on Behcet’s Disease will be held in Berlin 27–29 June 2002. Further details: Professor Ch Zouboulis (email: zoudber@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-OTT VA. We apologise for the error.