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PREDICTORS OF OCULAR ABNORMALITIES IN PATIENTS WITH HIV/AIDS

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HIV affects all organ systems of body including eye and its appendages. There are many ocular abnormalities seen in patients with HIV/AIDS (life time risk 50-100%). 200 HIV positive patients (ages 18-50 years) were included in this cross sectional observational study done in Department of Medicine, PGIMER and Dr RML hospital, New Delhi (India). Patients with history of trauma/ surgical intervention to the eye or diabetes, hypertension, renal failure and other comorbidities were excluded. Visual acuity testing, slit lamp examination, tonometry, indirect, direct ophthalmoscopy were done. Of 200 patients, 41 (20.5%) had ocular abnormalities, majority of which were males. Of these 41, only 50% were symptomatic for any ocular pathology. Most of the patients had visual acuity of 6/9 and normal IOP. The most common finding was HIV retinopathy (soft exudates 5.5%, retinal haemorrhages 1.5%). Other findings included keratoconjunctivitis sicca (2.5%), cataract (3.5%), papilledema (2%), optic atrophy (1%), CMV retinitis (1%) and blepharitis, preseptal cellulitis, conjunctivitis, choroid tubercles, stye (0.5%). Amongst all factors studied, male gender, longer duration of disease, late initiation of HAART and low CD4 count were found to be the major predictors of ocular abnormalities ($p < 0.05$). Ocular opportunistic infections were seen only in patients with $CD4 < 100/\mu\text{L}$. These abnormalities were not associated with the type of HAART. Ocular abnormalities are very common in patients with HIV/AIDS (20%) and most of them are asymptomatic. Majority of these are due HIV itself. Since ART in India is started late in the course of disease i.e. at $CD4$ count $< 350/\mu\text{L}$, the prevalence of ocular lesions are higher when compared to western population. Most of these eye problems go undiagnosed due to poor access to medical care and ophthalmologists and ignorance of physicians. The physician should be aware of these eye lesions and screen all the patients of HIV to prevent irreversible damage to the eye.

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