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Retinal Diseases Fact Sheet

Dry Age-Related Macular Degeneration (Dry AMD)

Macular degeneration results from damage to the macula, the part of the eye responsible for central vision and seeing fine details clearly.[5] Most cases occur as part of the aging process and are known as age-related macular degeneration (AMD).[6] All cases begin as dry AMD, the early form which accounts for 85 percent to 90 percent of all cases.[7]

Prevalence

- About 10 million people in the U.S. have AMD[6]
- Dry AMD accounts for 85 percent to 90 percent of all cases[7]
- It is estimated that the prevalence of advanced AMD in the U.S. will grow to nearly 3 million by 2020 due to the aging baby boomer generation[8]

Risks

- AMD is a leading cause of vision loss in people over age 60[5]
- Women tend to be at greater risk than men, and Caucasians are more likely to lose vision from AMD than African- Americans and Asian populations[9]
- Smoking, obesity and family history could also put a person at risk of AMD[9]

Symptoms

- In early stages, AMD may not cause any noticeable symptoms[5]
- The disease may be present, and symptoms may occur, in one eye or both[5]
- People with dry AMD in only one eye often do not notice any change in their vision[5]

Wet Age-Related Macular Degeneration (Wet AMD)

Wet age-related macular degeneration begins when blood vessels form abnormally at the back of the eye through a process called angiogenesis.[9] The blood vessels leak blood or fluid in the macula and form scars that cause central vision to deteriorate. All cases begin as dry AMD, but 10 to 15 percent progress to wet AMD, which can result in sudden and severe central vision loss.[7]

Prevalence

- Approximately 90 percent of all AMD-related blindness results from wet AMD[7]
- Between 1 and 1.5 million Americans have wet AMD[6,7]
- About 200,000 new cases of wet AMD are diagnosed each year in North America[6]

Risks

- Risks for wet AMD similarly increases for people over age 60[5]
- As with dry AMD, women tend to be at greater risk than men, and Caucasians tend to be at greater risk than African- Americans and Asian populations[9]
- Similarly, smoking, obesity and family history could also put a person at risk of wet AMD[9]

Symptoms

- Sudden blurred vision[11]
- Difficulty seeing at a distance or doing detailed work[11]
- Blind spots develop in the middle of the field of vision[11]
- Colors become hard to distinguish[11]
- Edges or lines appear wavy[11]

Diabetic Macular Edema (DME)

Diabetic macular edema is a serious eye condition that may affect people with diabetes (Type 1 and Type 2). The macula is the central portion of the retina and the part of the eye responsible for sharp central vision. DME results when the damaged blood vessels leak fluid and cause swelling, which blurs vision. If retinopathy worsens, severe vision loss and even blindness can occur.[1]

Prevalence

- DME is a leading cause of vision loss for people with diabetes[2]
- Approximately 745,000 people in the U.S. have DME[3]
- Approximately 55 percent are unaware they have the condition[4]

Risks

- All people with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes are at risk for DME[1]
- The risk for developing DME is closely associated with the length of time a patient has lived with diabetes and the severity of diabetic retinopathy[1]

Symptoms

- Blurred or double vision[2]
- Loss of contrast[2]
- Patches of vision loss, which may appear as small black dots or lines “floating” across the front of the eye[2]

Retinal Vein Occlusion (RVO)

Retinal vein occlusion occurs when the normal blood flow through a retinal vein becomes blocked, causing swelling (edema) and hemorrhages in the retina, which may result in vision loss. RVO is commonly caused by a clot in the retinal vein. Macular swelling often occurs as a result of RVO. When fluid collects between the layers of the macula, vision can become blurred and distorted.[12]

Prevalence

- RVO affects more than 1 million people in the U.S. and is the second-most common cause of vision loss due to retinal vascular disease[13,14]
- An estimated 887,000 people are affected by branch-RVO, while approximately 265,000 people are affected by central-RVO[13]

Risks

- RVO typically affects patients who are over age 50, and the incidence increases with age[15]
- People with a history of high blood pressure, hypertension, diabetes and atherosclerosis are at an increased risk for developing RVO[15]

Symptoms

- Sudden blurring or vision loss in all or part of one eye[16]
- Temporary loss of central vision lasting a few seconds to minutes (less frequent)[16]
- Visual disturbance centrally or peripherally[16]

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[14] Rehak J, Rehak M. Branch retinal vein occlusion: pathogenesis, visual prognosis, and treatment modalities. Curr Eye Res. 2008;33:111-131.
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[16] American Academy of Ophthalmology. Who Is At Risk for Central Retinal Vein Occlusion? Available at: http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/central-retinal-vein-occlusion-symptoms.cfm. Accessed August 27, 2013.

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