

PATIENT CARE ISSUE

GETTING THE DROPS IN IS AS IMPORTANT AS HAVING THE RIGHT DROPS: A STUDY ON PATIENT AWARENESS AND COMPLIANCE IN THE TREATMENT OF GLAUCOMA

M. Moutsou¹, M. Syrimi¹, H. Laganoski¹

¹Department of Ophthalmology, Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup, Kent - United Kingdom

Background/Introduction: Glaucoma is a chronic progressive disease that requires patient awareness to aid compliance with treatment, in order to avoid irreversible visual field loss. The aim of our study was to identify patient satisfaction with the information provided about glaucoma, assess compliance and identify any pitfalls in drop administration and the need for more detailed counselling.

Methods: Data was collected prospectively from consecutive patients with chronic glaucoma, who attended a single glaucoma clinic at Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup. The patients were asked to answer a questionnaire composed of ten questions. These included their satisfaction with the information provided about their condition, the source of information and the requirement of additional information. Data was also collected on the number of drops missed during a month (calculated over a year), possible side effects from treatment, problems with compliance and drop administration and the use of compliance aids. The patients were also filmed during drop administration, to check their technique. The data was collected and analysed by a single clinician.

Results: Sixty-five patients (36 males, 29 females) completed the questionnaire. The median age range was 70-79, with 65% of patients in the age range 70-89. The diagnosis of POAG was given in 62% of patients. The majority of patients (66%) were given a single bottle of agent/s. Bimatoprost and timolol 0.25% were the most commonly used medications as single treatment and in combination, at 42% and 40% respectively. Side-effects from treatment were reported in 22% (14 out of 65 patients). Redness was the most common side effect, with soreness, itchiness, dryness, breathlessness also reported. Most of our patients rated their knowledge about glaucoma "average" and 94% of them would have liked more information about glaucoma. Good compliance was documented in 82% of patients (53 out of 65). The remaining 18% of patients reported missing their drops 2-3 times a month, with a single patient missing the drops 4 times a week. The main issues with compliance were forgetfulness, difficulty with drop administration and social circumstances, as some drops were partly administered by others. Difficulties with drop administration were reported by 20% of our patients (13 out of 65). Of those, 54% (7 out of 13), had difficulties with the bottle (opening, squeezing), while the rest had difficulties targeting the eye due to arthritis, tremor or poor vision. Of the 13 patients, 8 were keen to try a compliance aid. Repeat application if the eye was initially "missed" was reported in 86% of patients (56 out of 65).

Conclusion: Although most of our patients seem to understand the importance of compliance, our study demonstrates the need for more information to be provided to patients about their condition. Following this study we have contacted the International Glaucoma Association who visited our department and supplied more information packs, compliance aids and contact cards for our patients. These are now offered routinely to all new glaucoma patients and are also available to chronic patients.