

Photodynamic Therapy

Introduction

Abnormal growth of leaky blood vessels in the eye caused by wet age-related vascular degeneration (AMD), pathologic myopia (PM) or central serous retinopathy (CSR) may lead to loss of central vision within weeks or months if no appropriate treatment is given. These newly created blood vessels leak, bleed, and scar the retina, distorting or destroying central vision.

In photodynamic therapy, a photosensitizing agent (called verteporfin) is injected into the bloodstream. Verteporfin will stay in abnormal leaky blood vessels. When it is activated by light, it closes up the blood vessels without damaging healthy tissues.

Procedure

A photosensitizing agent is injected intravenously by the doctor. A special laser light will then be administered to the eye. Once the photosensitizing agent in leaky blood vessels is activated, it closes up the blood vessels and reduces the leaking of blood and fluid. Given there is a possibility that the sealed blood vessels may re-open in future, further treatment may be needed.

Possible Risks and Complications

1. Pink eye
2. Pain in the eye
3. Decrease or changes in vision
4. Floater / seeing flashes of light
5. Blurred vision
6. Headache
7. Fainting in serious cases (due to photosensitivity allergic reaction)
8. Injection site rashes or extravasation causing pain, swelling and redness
9. Retinal detachment, retinal or choroidal vessel non-perfusion (less than 1%)
10. Severe vision loss in 1 - 5% of patients, partial recovery of vision was observed in some patients

Remarks

1. Within 24 to 48 hours after verteporfin injection, the patient becomes very sensitive to light. Prolonged exposure to direct sunlight or bright indoor light would cause hypersensitivity of the eye (with symptoms similar to burning eyes). Do wear dark sunglasses as a precaution if you must go outdoors in the daylight.
2. Do not drive or operate machinery after the treatment as you may experience blurred vision.
3. A minority of patients would experience back pain after verteporfin injection, but the pain would subside gradually.
4. If there is any leaking of photosensitizing agent on the skin during the injection process, you may feel pain in the affected area. Cover the area to avoid direct exposure to light and apply a cold compress in order to reduce swelling, pain and discoloration at the injection site and prevent local skin burn. Should the extravasation site deteriorate, please contact the attending doctor immediately at 2608 3368.

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