

# Combined regime effective for CNV secondary to AMD

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in Fort Lauderdale

INTRAVITREAL triamcinolone appears to be a useful adjunct to verteporfin photodynamic therapy (Visudyne, Novartis) in the treatment of occult and minimally classic subfoveal choroidal neovascularisation (CNV) secondary to age-related macular degeneration, a new trial suggests.

Researchers presented preliminary results from an ongoing prospective randomised, placebo-controlled pilot clinical trial at the annual meeting of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology.

The study's protocol includes patients with evidence of recent progression of CNV based upon presence of subretinal blood. In addition, they must have lesions measuring less than 540 microns in greatest linear dimension, an ETDRS visual acuity score of 34 to 73 letters, and no prior treatment with PDT.

Thirty patients, with a mean age 78 years, have now been randomised to treatment with standard PDT or PDT followed

30 minutes later by intravitreal injection of triamcinolone acetonide 14 mg/0.1cc. Maximum follow-up was nine months reported Varun Chaudhary MD, Ivey Eye Institute, London, Ontario, Canada.

## No significant visual loss after treatment with combined regimen

Patients that received PDT alone experienced a gradual decline in visual acuity between baseline and six months with stabilisation thereafter, but the change from baseline to nine months was statistically significant. In contrast, mean visual acuity in the combination treatment group has fluctuated slightly but has not changed significantly from baseline at any visit.

The proportion of patients maintaining vision within 15 letters of baseline has decreased over time in the PDT only group, so that by six months, only 67% had avoided moderate vision loss. In contrast, the proportion of patients with moderate vision loss has remained at about 15%

across all visits in the combination group.

"It is interesting to note that at six months, 33% of patients treated with PDT only had experienced moderate vision loss, which is very similar to the 34% rate reported after six months for the subgroup of eyes with occult CNV treated with PDT in the Verteporfin in Photodynamic Therapy (VIP) trial," Dr Chaudhary said.

Whereas no patient in the PDT plus triamcinolone group has required retreatment, 93% (13/14) in the PDT alone group were treated at three months, 58% at six months, and 33% at nine months.

## Improved contrast sensitivity

Contrast sensitivity testing results showed an average decline at all time points in the PDT treatment group with a significant four letter decrease at six months. In the combination group, mean contrast sensitivity was improved from baseline at all visits with a two letters gain at six months, although that did not reach statistical significance.

Macular thickness at baseline in the PDT group was 323 microns and has remained stable at all visits. In the combination treatment group, macular thickness was 388 microns at baseline, declined significantly to 215 microns at mean weeks, and decreased to 190 microns at nine months.

After six weeks, intraocular pressure had increased significantly in eyes treated with intravitreal triamcinolone, with a mean increase of 4.0 mmHg, and continued to increase at three and six months. However, by nine months, mean IOP had decreased and was no longer statistically different from baseline.

So far, there is some evidence of cataract progression, but data on degree and timing of the changes have not yet been fully analysed.

"The primary efficacy endpoint in this study is avoidance of moderate vision loss (loss of less than 15 letters) and the results so far seem to favour the combination treatment. In addition, data from contrast sensitivity and OCT measurements of central retinal thickness show statistically and clinically significant benefits for combining intravitreal triamcinolone with PDT," he said.

He noted that the potential advantages of the dual treatment have been achieved without the need for any retreatment or

serious safety concerns. While there has been a significant increase in IOP overall in eyes treated with triamcinolone, elevations have been controlled effectively with topical medications and there have been no severe complications, he said.

"The study is ongoing and no conclusions can be drawn from the data obtained to date. However, they do show some interesting positive trends and we look forward to completing this study and performing the final analyses," said Dr Chaudhary.

Speaking from the audience, Carmen Puliafito MD, MBA, professor and chairman, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, University of Miami, observed that the findings are consonant with those of large retrospective studies undertaken at his institution. However, he cautioned that follow-up in the prospective study is limited and that his clinical experience indicates the treatment effect of adjunctive intravitreal triamcinolone injection eventually wears off.

"Results from our analyses of IOP changes do suggest that the effects of triamcinolone are dissipating. Therefore, it will be important to continue following these patients for the planned duration of one year," Dr Chaudhary said.

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