

Retrobulbar haemorrhage: can we prevent blindness?

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ABSTRACT

Retrobulbar haemorrhage is a rare ocular emergency that complicates blunt trauma, eyelid or orbital surgery and requires urgent identification and management. Orbital decompression done in time can successfully reverse vision loss even in the setting of prolonged blindness. A 46-year-old male with no known medical illness, presented with severe right eye pain, proptosis and reduced vision following motor vehicle accident that occurred six hours prior. On examination of the right eye, the globe was tense with ophthalmoplegia in all gazes. The right pupil was mid-dilated 5mm and unreactive with visual acuity no perception of light. The lens was normal and fundus examination showed normal optic disc with multiple retinal bleeds surrounding the disc area, other posterior segment findings were unremarkable. Intraocular pressure was not able to be obtained as the patient was in severe pain. However, it was assumed to be very high as the globe was tense and hard. A diagnosis of acute retrobulbar haemorrhage was made and emergency lateral canthotomy and cantholysis was performed in the emergency department. The patient's condition continued to improve and on day 26 post trauma his vision improved to 6/24 with resolved ophthalmoplegia. Early recognition and immediate orbital decompression can help to preserve vision loss in retrobulbar haemorrhage, regardless of the time since injury.