Sir,

Awareness and the use of nutritional supplementation for age-related macular degeneration patients

The Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS) recommendations published in 2001 were an important cornerstone in the treatment of patients suffering from age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Individuals with intermediate AMD or advanced unilateral AMD were shown to have 25% risk reduction of progression to advanced AMD by using daily high-dose nutritional supplementations.1

We conducted a survey among 99 AMD patients suitable for nutritional supplementations treatment in order to assess their awareness regarding their own ocular disease and to investigate the implementation of the AREDS recommendation.

Most patients (55%) could not correctly name their own ocular disease and named AMD in no less than 21 different manners, including terms like ‘explosion in the retina’ and ‘net coming out of the eye’.

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of how the patients scored their knowledge about AMD, with nearly half (43%) who had little knowledge about their disease.

Most of the patients (80%) who were suitable candidates for nutritional supplementations were actually receiving them (Figure 2), but out of these patients only 58% were taking the recommended twice daily dosage (Figure 3). Accordingly, overall summary shows that only 46% of patients who were considered suitable for supplement treatment were receiving the proper treatment and dosage. In the current study, the chance of a patient to receive the proper dosage was higher when treated by retinal specialist (64%) than by general (non-retinal specialist) ophthalmologist (40%).

Comment

The current study demonstrates that AMD patients lack knowledge about their own ocular disease with more than half of the patients who could not correctly name their own illness. Other studies conducted internationally demonstrated lack of awareness for this blinding disease among the general population with 9.2–30% who were not familiar with the disease.2–5

This study underlines that most patients suitable for nutrient supplementations usage were not receiving them at all or received an incorrect dosage.

Accordingly, further patient education and better implementation of the AREDS recommendations is advisable.
References


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