

Orthopaedic Connection

Joint Problems Can Affect Your Eyes?

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Be honest now, you thought Orthopaedic Surgeons only knew about bones. Well, as it turns out I have to know about more than just the musculoskeletal system!

Rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune inflammatory musculoskeletal diseases affect lots more than the joints.

Rheumatic disease can be manifested in the eyes causing many disorders that if left untreated can have very serious consequences.

Many Types of Arthritis

Readers of this column have learned that there are many different types of arthritis. Some of them seriously affect the eyes. You should not ignore any of the conditions we cover because they can lead to blindness. The errant immune system attacks the eyes as well as the joints. It is not well understood why the eyes are attacked.

Eye Attack

- Dry Eye

Dry eye is most often associated with Rheumatoid Arthritis. It causes chronic burning, redness and eye irritation. It can cause corneal ulceration. If dry eye is present you must be checked for Rheumatoid Arthritis.

- Scleritis

Scleritis is inflammation of the blood vessels in the eye's white part. It causes a purple discoloration and sometimes severe pain. It can lead to corneal inflammation. You need to be checked for an autoimmune disease.

- Iritis

Inflammation of the iris causes pain, light sensitivity and blurred vision. It is associated with spinal inflammation (spondylitis) and psoriatic arthritis.

Treatment

My job is to recognize and diagnose autoimmune diseases and associated eye conditions when they occur in my patients. Once I have identified an eye condition associated with an autoimmune disease I have to consult one of our Ophthalmologist colleagues whom I know and trust.

The specialty which directs the overall care of patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis and other autoimmune diseases is Rheumatology which is a subspecialty of Internal Medicine.

Teamwork

Working together as a team, my patients get the best care. I have never had a problem consulting a colleague to evaluate and treat patient conditions that are beyond my area of expertise. The saying, "Half of being smart is knowing what you are dumb at" is a principle I keep in mind. It has served me well.

In Closing

If you have a rheumatic condition or autoimmune disease and have no eye symptoms that is a false sense of security. I recommend you see an Ophthalmologist every year for an examination. Your eyes are too important not to.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website

www.orthopodsurgeon.com is a great source of musculoskeletal information that you can use. In addition it is your entry to the Gratiot County Herald Archive of all articles I have written for GCH Orthopaedic Connection. They are all listed most recent all the way back to first. A couple of mouse clicks and the whole article appears! The articles and website cover everything I treat in the office and hospital.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush