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A unique case report of poppers maculopathy masquerading as cataract

Statement of the Problem: Poppers is a popular slang term for a group of inhalant drugs called alkyl nitrates. In the UK, the use of poppers is not covered under the Psychoactive Substances Act of 2016. This means that it is not illegal to possess and can be supplied if it is not advertised for human consumption. As a result, the drugs are readily available and use is likely to be increasing. Poppers maculopathy is a complication of poppers inhalation. It presents with non-specific visual symptoms and normal fundoscopy, which makes it difficult to diagnose without optical coherence tomography (OCT). To our knowledge, we present the first case of a patient with co-existing cataract and poppers maculopathy.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: We conducted an isolated case report.

Findings: A man in his 50's had vague symptoms of slight blurry vision and a visual acuity of 6/12 in both eyes. This was attributed to mild cataract as the remainder of the examination was normal. After uncomplicated cataract extraction in one eye, his post-operative acuity was still 6/12 and this triggered further investigation. He had an OCT, which showed characteristic bilaterally symmetric subfoveal elevation of the outer retinal layers with disruption of the photoreceptor inner segment-outer segment junction (figure 1). Further history revealed recent use of poppers prior to surgery. The patient stopped poppers intake and proceeded with cataract surgery in his second eye. Eight month follow-up revealed 6/6 vision bilaterally despite ongoing OCT abnormalities.

Conclusion & Significance: We highlight the importance of taking a recreational drug history and performing OCT in the peri-operative assessment of a cataract patient, especially where the cataract may not fully explain the patient's symptoms. We are also the first to show good cataract surgery outcomes in a patient with poppers maculopathy and complete visual recovery on drug cessation that occurs despite ongoing maculopathy on OCT scans.

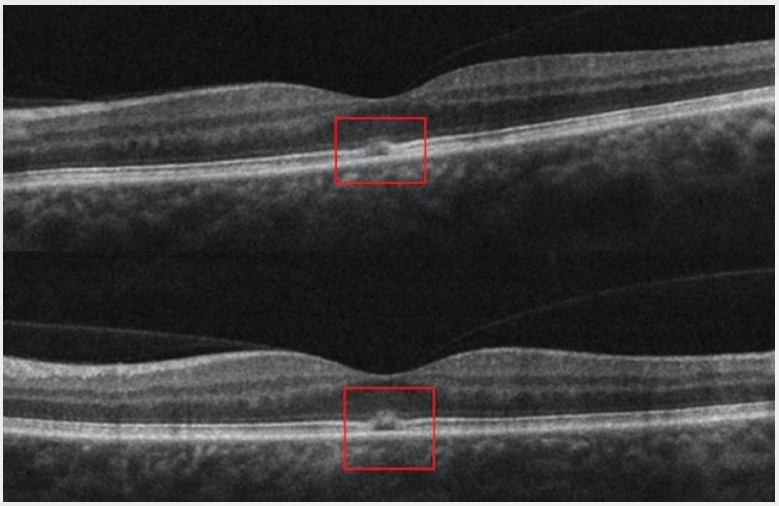

Figure 1: Spectral domain OCT showing symmetrical disruption and elevation of the inner-outer retinal layers at the fovea in the right (top) and left (bottom) eyes.

Biography

Mumta Kanda is an Ophthalmology Registrar in London in her fourth year of training.

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