

CANADIAN UVEITIS SOCIETY

THURSDAY 12 JUNE

Paper #A-00087

A re-emergence of ocular syphilis: clinical findings and management

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Purpose: To report an increasing rise in syphilis cases with ocular manifestations and to describe the clinical findings and management.

Methods: Retrospective, observational case series. A review of clinical and laboratory records of all patients with confirmatory serological testing for syphilis evaluated at uveitis clinics at two academic hospitals in Toronto from 1996-2007.

Results: This resulted in six cases. All of the patients were males (mean age 42 years, range 26-64) and they presented with symptoms including pain, redness, photophobia, floaters, and decreased vision. Signs included anterior chamber inflammation, vitritis, retinitis, choroiditis, and optic disc edema. Four cases (67%) had a unilateral presentation, five cases (83%) presented as a panuveitis, and one case (17%) presented as a posterior uveitis. Of three patients (50%) that had decreased visual acuity, two improved with antibiotic treatment. Four patients (67%) had systemic manifestations and two (33%) were HIV positive. All patients had an improvement of visual symptoms after treatment with intravenous or intramuscular penicillin G.

Conclusions: Syphilis may be an overlooked cause of uveitis and a delay in diagnosis can result in irreversible visual loss. In light of its recent re-emergence in North America, a high index of clinical suspicion should prompt serological testing as this is a curable disease.