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Commentary

Exploring the Determinants of Myopic Maculopathy

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DESCRIPTION

Myopic maculopathy is a significant cause of vision impairment globally, especially in individuals with high myopia. It is characterized by progressive changes in the macula, the central part of the retina, leading to irreversible vision loss. Understanding the determining factors behind myopic maculopathy is significant for early detection, prevention, and management of this condition. In this article, we delve into the various factors contributing to the development and progression of myopic maculopathy.

One of the primary determining factors for myopic maculopathy is the degree of refractive error, commonly referred to as myopia. Higher levels of myopia, typically defined as refractive error exceeding -6.00 diopters, are associated with an increased risk of developing myopic maculopathy. The elongation of the eyeball in high myopia leads to mechanical stretching and thinning of the retina, particularly in the macular region, making it more susceptible to degenerative changes. The elongation of the axial length of the eyeball in high myopia not only predisposes individuals to myopic maculopathy but also leads to choroidal thinning. The choroid is a vascular layer beneath the retina responsible for supplying oxygen and nutrients to the retinal cells. In high myopia, the thinning of the choroid compromises its supportive function, further exacerbating the degenerative changes in the macula.

Genetic factors play a significant role in the development of myopic maculopathy. Studies have identified several genetic variants associated with an increased risk of developing high myopia and its complications, including myopic maculopathy. Family history of myopia and related ocular conditions can significantly increase an individual's predisposition to developing myopic maculopathy, highlighting the importance of genetic screening and counseling in at-risk populations.

In addition to genetic predisposition, environmental and lifestyle factors also contribute to the development and progression of myopic maculopathy. Prolonged near-work activities, such as reading or using digital devices, especially during childhood and adolescence, have been implicated in the onset of myopia and its associated complications. Outdoor activities and adequate exposure to natural sunlight have been shown to have a protective effect against myopia development, emphasizing the importance of lifestyle modifications in mitigating the risk of myopic maculopathy. The biomechanical properties of the sclera, the outermost layer of the eye, play a vital role in the pathogenesis of myopic maculopathy. Alterations in scleral biomechanics, such as decreased stiffness and increased compliance, contribute to the progressive elongation of the eyeball observed in high myopia. These structural changes not only predispose individuals to myopic maculopathy but also influence the response to treatment modalities aimed at slowing down the progression of myopia and its complications. Abnormalities in the vitreoretinal interface, including Posterior Vitreous Detachment (PVD) and vitreomacular traction (VMT), have been implicated in the development of myopic maculopathy. PVD, the separation of the vitreous gel from the retina, can lead to the formation of retinal tears and subsequent macular complications in highly myopic eyes. VMT, characterized by abnormal adhesion between the vitreous and macula, can cause mechanical traction and distortion of the macular architecture, contributing to the progression of myopic maculopathy. Myopic maculopathy encompasses a spectrum of clinical manifestations, ranging from early changes such as posterior staphyloma and tessellated fundus to advanced stages including lacquer cracks, Choroidal Neovascularization (CNV), and myopic macular degeneration. Classification systems such as the Meta-Analysis for Pathologic Myopia (META-PM) and the International photographic classification and grading system for myopic maculopathy provide standardized criteria for grading the severity of myopic maculopathy, facilitating accurate diagnosis and management decisions. Various imaging modalities are employed in the diagnosis and monitoring of myopic maculopathy, including Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT), fundus photography, and fluorescein angiography. OCT, in particular, allows high-resolution visualization of the retinal layers and choroid, enabling the detection of subtle structural changes associated with myopic maculopathy. Fundus Autofluorescence (FAF) and OCT Optical Coherence Tomography Angiography (OCTA) provide additional

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information on retinal pigment epithelial alterations and choroidal vasculature, respectively, aiding in the comprehensive evaluation of myopic maculopathy.

The management of myopic maculopathy involves a multidisciplinary approach aimed at preserving vision and preventing further progression of the disease. Lifestyle modifications, including reducing near-work activities and increasing outdoor time, are recommended to slow down the progression of myopia in children and adolescents. Pharmacological interventions, such as intravitreal anti-Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor (anti-VEGF) injections and photodynamic therapy, are indicated for the treatment of CNV associated with myopic maculopathy. Surgical interventions, including vitrectomy and scleral buckling, may be considered in cases of complicated retinal detachment or macular hole secondary to myopic maculopathy.