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Glaucoma: Neuroprotection and role of alternative medicines in drug research

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Statement of Problem: Glaucoma is a chronic, neurodegenerative disease that originates with pressure-induced damage at the optic nerve head and subsequent death of retinal ganglion cells with an associated loss of vision. Glaucoma research, similar to that of other neurodegenerative diseases, has seen an increasing focus on neuroprotection. There is no specific targeted therapy for neuroprotection in glaucoma. It is estimated that there are more than 60 million cases of glaucoma worldwide and it will increase to 80 million by 2020. The estimated prevalence of glaucoma is 2.65% in people above 40 years of age. Globally, Primary Open-Angle Glaucoma (POAG) is more prevalent than Primary Angle Closure Glaucoma (PACG) and responsible for around three fourth of all glaucoma cases. Overall glaucoma is the second major cause of blindness after cataract and refractive errors. More importantly, it is the most common cause of irreversible blindness globally. It is estimated that more than 3 million people are blind due to glaucoma. The entire world is looking at the other systems of medicine to tackle the situation and looking upon preventive ophthalmology for improving and maintaining vision. In such a scenario, a study on Glaucoma management through Ayurveda gains much importance. Ancient Indian traditional medicine is very rich and diverse. It is full of different formulations based on practical experiences. So the study of these traditional medicines will give a new boon to Glaucoma patients and will help in the improvement of the quality of life of an individual. The present study is undertaken to put a hypothesis on the role of Ayurveda to study the effect of the specific neuroprotective action of the drug in slowing progression of the disease. The body detoxification process in Ayurveda i.e. Panchakarma and concept of body rejuvenation therapy like Rasayana can treat Glaucoma by balancing the basic elements of the body.

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