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Patient perception of dilating eye drops in the eye clinic

Rachel Fletcher

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, UK

Background & Aim: Mydriatic drops are commonly used in ophthalmology clinic to aid fundus examination. The risk of mydriatic drops precipitating glaucoma is low. However, mydriatic drops can have an impact on patients and their experience of ophthalmic services. Patient centered care should address patients' expectations. Research into patient perceptions of dilating eye drops is limited. Patient's perceptions of dilating eye drops, side effects and the information patients received in clinic was reviewed.

Methods: A printed questionnaire was given to all patients attending clinic (single-centre) for the period of one week (July 2014) and returned by the patients on leaving the department. The questionnaire assessed patient demographics, patient satisfaction, prior information given, clinic information and whether patients had driven to clinic.

Results: 162 questionnaires were completed. Overall patients were happy with the way they received information about the dilating drops and 98% (n=159) reported they would be happy to have the drops again in the future. 82% (n=13) of patients, had been informed prior to attending clinic that dilating eye drops may be used. But several patients were unsure why the drops were needed (27%, n= 44) and worryingly, 16% (n= 26) of patients admitted to driving immediately after their appointment. Most patients were informed of the risks associated with mydriatic drops and the majority of patients felt blurred vision was the most troublesome, potential side effect (83%, n=134). 72% (n=117) of patients were aware pain may occur and when to seek medical advice, whilst 83% had been informed of the potential risk of glaucoma following drop instillation.

Conclusion: In sampling just one department, six different data sources were used to inform patients of the potential side effects of dilating drops. It appeared that a simpler, replicable and more consistent method of consenting patients for mydriatic drops was required to aid informed, patient consent. The potential side effects of mydriatic drugs did not deter patients from re-attending clinics. The majority of patients would be happy to receive dilating drops in the future. Increased patient education prior to attending clinic is needed to ensure the issue of driving is addressed.

Biography

Rachel Fletcher is a Junior Doctor in the UK. She has completed her Medical degree at Peninsula Medical School and is currently pursuing Diploma of Tropical Medicine at Liverpool School Tropical Medicine.

rachel.fletcher101@gmail.com

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