Patients with advanced glaucoma who are to undergo trabeculectomy should be warned that there is a small risk of permanent visual loss as a consequence of the surgery.

The Science behind the Tip

Transient visual disturbance after trabeculectomy is common and it can take several months for the vision to recover. The risk of permanent visual loss with modern techniques is a rare consequence of the surgery.

In patients with advanced visual field loss, especially if there is a “split” fixation (loss of visual field within the central 5°), the surgery can be followed by permanent loss of vision as a consequence of unexplained “wipe out” in 1-2% and by severe hypotony maculopathy in a further 1.5%. Risk factors include high preoperative IOP and severe hypotony on the first postoperative day. It is more likely to occur when the surgery is complicated.

Because of the medico-legal implications, patients with advanced glaucoma should be warned of the risk before they undergo trabeculectomy. This should be documented on the consent form.

References


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