

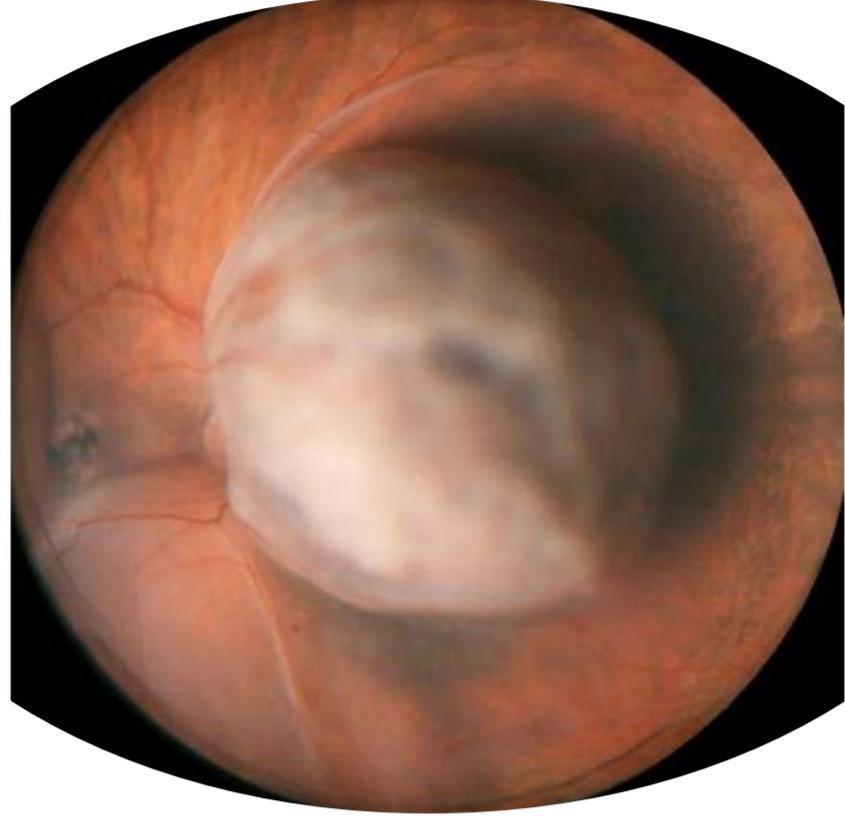
Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Scottish Ocular Oncology Service

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INTRODUCTION

- The Scottish Ocular Oncology Service is the designated National Centre of Excellence in Scotland for adult Ocular Oncology.
- The commonest primary intraocular malignancy managed in this centre is uveal melanoma, of which 90% are choroidal in origin, with the rest involving the ciliary body and iris.¹
- The incidence of uveal melanoma in the UK is approximately 5 in a million;² approximately 650 uveal melanoma cases are diagnosed and treated per year in the UK according to Ocular Oncology Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN) Annual Meetings.
 - The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on NHS Scotland with significant repercussions.
- Anecdotal evidence from the Scottish Ocular Oncology Service indicates a reduction in referral numbers; this is likely the result of a national lockdown period compounded by government shielding & isolation guidance, reduced health seeking behaviour due to fear of contracting COVID-19 virus in hospital settings, cessation of community optometry services, and reduced local eye department volumes.

AIMS

- The Scottish Ocular Oncology Service aimed to evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the adult Ocular Oncology services.

METHODS

- Retrospective review related to uveal melanoma with particular emphasis on:
 - Number of referrals to the Scottish Ocular Oncology Service
 - Number of new diagnoses of uveal melanoma
 - Number of uveal melanoma procedures performed
 - Treatment modalities used for uveal melanoma
- Data was collected from 26th March – 26th June 2020, during which clinic workload was significantly reduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and was compared to the corresponding period in the previous year.

RESULTS

	March 26 th – June 26 th 2019	March 26 th – June 26 th 2020	% Reduction
Scottish Ocular Oncology Service			
Total number of clinic appointments (new & return)	293	160	-54.6%
Number of new referrals	50	22	-44.0%
Diagnosis of Uveal Melanoma	20	7	-35.0%
Number of Uveal Melanoma procedures performed	31	9	-29.0%

About the author

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Treatment modality	March 26 th – June 26 th 2019	March 26 th – June 26 th 2020
Scottish Ocular Oncology Service		
Ruthenium plaque brachytherapy	7	2
Proton beam radiotherapy	11	3
Enucleation	5	2
Photodynamic therapy	3	1
Infrared diode	4	1
Total	30	9

CONCLUSION

- Expected surges in the number of ocular oncology patients presenting to the Scottish Ocular Oncology Service post lockdown as a result of delayed and missed diagnoses during the COVID-19 period may potentially overwhelm already reduced clinic capacity.
- Delays also may mean patients present with a more advanced disease, necessitating enucleation rather than globe salvage treatment options.



FUTURE WORK

- Further collection of data during post lockdown period to establish whether an anticipated rebound effect of increased number of referrals, number of new diagnoses, number of performed procedures and differences in treatment modalities used (such as an increase in enucleation as a treatment option) is witnessed.
- Further research to establish the effect of delayed & missed diagnosis of uveal melanoma during the COVID-19 period on long-term survival rates
- Enhancement of referral pathway such as improved communication between referrer & patients/clinicians



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