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GLAUCOMA TREATMENT: NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE



Dr. Stefan Pfennigsdorf
Ophthalmologist, Polch

In September 2016, Allergan Malaysia hosted a symposium titled “Glaucoma Treatment: Now and Into the Future”. The main speaker, Dr. Stefan Pfennigsdorf is a practicing ophthalmologist from Germany with years of dedication and deep interest in glaucoma research.

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness globally and, as of the present, accounts for approximately 15% of all blindness cases in Europe. According to Dr. Pfennigsdorf, early detection and treatment of glaucoma is necessary because the disease is “silent” and often goes undiagnosed until some form of vision loss has already occurred. Moreover, the damage is irreversible, progressive and can lead to significant quality of life impairment in later stages.

Glaucoma results from an abnormal increase in eye pressure or “intraocular pressure” as measured in millimeters-mercury (mmHg). This is because fluid or “aqueous” builds up in the eye due to impaired outflow pathways. The loss of

balance between aqueous production and drainage leads to increased eye pressure, compression of the optic nerve and slow, progressive damage of neurons.

One of the cornerstones of glaucoma treatment is thus, pressure control. Once there is evidence of increased pressure and nerve damage, treatment should be focused at immediately lowering the eye pressure to normal levels. Dr. Pfennigsdorf stressed that in the treatment of glaucoma, every mmHg decrease in pressure matters. To illustrate further, he presented a flowchart on glaucoma therapy based on guidelines that are currently being used to manage glaucoma patients.

We are fortunate to be at a time when several treatment options already exist to treat glaucoma. Topical drops are given as first line as they are easy to administer and are non-invasive, unlike surgery. Drops act in either of two ways: to reduce fluid production or improve aqueous drainage. These eye drops can be given singly (monotherapy) or in combination. However, as much as possible, the patients should be maintained on the least number of medications to ensure treatment compliance.

Of all the pressure lowering topical medications available, prostaglandin analogues or prostamides are currently the first-line treatment



choices for most glaucoma cases. They work by improving fluid or aqueous drainage. There are many molecules of this class but Bimatoprost, a prostamide, has consistently been shown in several studies to have the strongest pressure lowering ability.

Bimatoprost, currently being marketed under the brand name Lumigan® by Allergan has recently been reformulated to new concentration (Lumigan® 0.01%). This new formulation improves the balance of efficacy, patient comfort and tolerability. Dr. Pfennigsdorf showcased his publications and clinical experience with

Lumigan® 0.01 where all patients demonstrated adequate pressure lowering, no disease progression, better safety and overall compliance.

The talk ended by reminding the audience that early and effective therapy is necessary in glaucoma patients to reduce progression, avoid visual impairment and preserve quality of life. Every unit reduction in pressure matters and to-date, prostamides, like Lumigan® 0.01% remain to be one of, if not the most, effective first-line treatment options for glaucoma.

