A CASE FOR EXCISIONAL GONIOTOMY

By Davinder S. Grover, MD, MPH

In this case, it would be inappropriate not to address the patient’s glaucoma at the time of cataract surgery. As has been well documented and studied, patients with glaucoma are at an increased risk of IOP spike in the immediate postoperative period. Given that this patient is on several medications and has actual visual field loss, I think excisional goniotomy combined with cataract surgery would be the best approach, as it offers the chance to improve the patient’s vision, improve her IOP, and decrease her dependence on glaucoma medications.

Excisional goniotomy provides mild to moderate IOP lowering while simultaneously decreasing dependence on glaucoma medications in the safest manner possible. Several published studies, as well as data from our practice, show that excisional goniotomy combined with cataract surgery tends to be quite successful in patients with this stage of glaucoma, with a high likelihood of decreasing IOP by 2 to 3 mm Hg and allowing discontinuation of one or even two medications.1–4

(Continued on page 39)
In this case, excisional goniotomy would be safely performed using topical anesthesia and would allow the patient to resume normal activity within 1 to 2 weeks. The postoperative course would not deviate dramatically from that of a standard cataract surgery, with the exception that I would likely treat the patient with topical steroids for a few weeks longer.

Recently, Sieck et al reported 12-month retrospective outcomes in a group of patients whose cases were similar to this one. They reported that, at 1 year, mean IOP decreased from 16.7 mm Hg to 13.8 mm Hg in the phaco/goniotomy group, with a 0.4 decrease in mean number of glaucoma medications. Similarly, we evaluated retrospective outcomes in eyes at our practice, and we found that, at 12 months, mean IOP decreased from 17.1 mm Hg on 2.4 glaucoma medications to 14.7 mm Hg on 1.0 medication in the phaco/goniotomy group.

In this case, I would recommend that the patient stop her aspirin use 1 week prior to surgery if possible. I would make sure that she could limit her activity for that week and sleep with her head above her heart to speed visual recovery and minimize the risk of blood reflux. Intraoperatively, I would use the amount of blood reflux and the quality of the episcleral venous fluid wave to help gauge and predict the likelihood of a successful outcome (Figures 1 and 2).


**Figure 1.** An intraoperative view of goniotomy with the Kahook Dual Blade (New World Medical).

**Figure 2.** An episcleral venous fluid wave following a 4-to-5-clock hour goniotomy, showing (A) the normal episcleral vasculature with the IOP at a physiologic state and (B) an episcleral fluid wave indicative of balanced salt solution blanching the nasal vasculature.

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(Dr. Grover, continued from page 38)

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the risk of hyphema. Moreover, with a trabecular microbypass stent, I tell patients that there is essentially no additional risk compared with cataract surgery alone.

Care should be taken to avoid a steroid response in all glaucoma patients undergoing cataract surgery. I prescribe fluorometholone gel twice daily or difluprednate once daily for 3 weeks, stopping it early if IOP increases. Finally, trabecular microbypass stenting has no effect on postoperative refractive error, and I routinely use this approach in patients receiving extended depth of focus or multifocal IOLs.

This 80-year-old patient with cataracts should be able to meet her goals of reduced medications and improved vision if monitored carefully. I would keep this patient on at least a prostaglandin analogue during the early postoperative period to prevent early IOP spikes and to prioritize visual recovery. If the IOP goals are not fully met, selective laser trabeculoplasty can be performed, but I would wait 4 months or so for the eye to stabilize.


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