Prevalence of Pseudoexfoliative Syndrome and Its Association with Systemic Conditions in the Tertiary Centre of South Gujarat

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Conflict of interest: No! Conflict of interest is found elsewhere considering this work.
Source of Funding: There was no financial support concerning this work

KEYWORDS

pseudoexfoliation syndrome, systemic conditions, hypertension, serum homocysteine, glaucoma, ocular findings, South Gujarat, diabetes mellitus, prevalence, risk factors.

ABSTRACT

Aim: This study aims to evaluate the prevalence of pseudoexfoliation syndrome (PES) and assess its association with various systemic conditions in a cohort from South Gujarat.
Material and Methods: A hospital-based prospective observational study was conducted from September 2022 to June 2023 at a tertiary care center in South Gujarat. Patients diagnosed with PES were included, and detailed ocular and systemic evaluations were performed. Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and logistic regression were used to analyze the data and identify associations between PES and systemic conditions, including hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and elevated serum homocysteine levels.
Results: The study included forty patients with a mean age of 65 years. Hypertension (37.5%) and diabetes mellitus (25%) were common comorbidities. Elevated intraocular pressure (62.5%) and optic nerve head abnormalities were prevalent among PES patients. A significant association was found between PES and hypertension (p=0.009) and elevated serum homocysteine levels (p=0.037), indicating a potential contribution of these conditions to PES pathophysiology. No significant association was found between PES and diabetes mellitus.
Conclusion: This study confirms the high prevalence of PES in South Gujarat and its association with systemic conditions like hypertension and elevated homocysteine levels. Early detection and management of PES and its comorbidities may help improve patient outcomes and reduce the risk of both ocular and systemic complications. Further studies with larger sample sizes are needed to deepen understanding of the complex relationship between PES and systemic diseases.

Introduction

Pseudoexfoliative syndrome (PXF) is an age-related systemic disorder characterized by the deposition of extracellular fibrillary material, often referred to as "pseudoexfoliation material" (PXFM), on various ocular structures, including the lens capsule, corneal endothelium, iris, and trabecular meshwork. This condition is considered a major risk factor for glaucoma, particularly in individuals with a family history of the syndrome. The deposition of PXF material can lead to increased intraocular pressure (IOP) and glaucomatous optic neuropathy [1].

Epidemiologically, PXF has a higher prevalence in older populations, especially those over the age of sixty. Its geographical distribution varies, with higher frequencies in regions of Europe, South America, and certain parts of Asia [2]. In addition to its ocular manifestations, PXF is associated with various systemic diseases, such as cardiovascular, neurological, and endocrine disorders [3]. Some studies have also highlighted its potential link to systemic conditions like hypertension, diabetes mellitus, stroke, and coronary artery disease, although the exact pathophysiological mechanisms remain poorly understood [4]. Genetic predisposition plays a significant role in the development of PXF, with certain populations exhibiting higher rates of its occurrence. Moreover, environmental factors, including ultraviolet exposure and smoking, have also been considered as potential contributing factors [5]. However, further research is needed to definitively establish these connections.

In tertiary centers, such as those in South Gujarat, understanding the prevalence of PXF and its association with systemic conditions is crucial. Identifying patients at higher risk for both ocular and systemic complications can lead to more effective management strategies, particularly for those with genetic or environmental risk factors. Early detection of PXF could improve patient outcomes and reduce the burden of associated health conditions.

Material and Methods

Study Setting and Place

The study was conducted at a **tertiary care center** in **South Gujarat**, a region known for its diverse patient population. The center is equipped with advanced diagnostic tools and provides a range of ophthalmologic and systemic health services, making it an ideal location for conducting observational studies on conditions like pseudoexfoliation syndrome (PES).

Study Duration

The study was conducted from **September 2022 to June 2023**. This period allowed for a comprehensive analysis of both ocular and systemic conditions associated with PES and ensured that sufficient data were collected from the required number of patients.

Data Collection and Patient Selection

Patients diagnosed with pseudoexfoliation syndrome during the study period were included in the study, following specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The total sample size for the study was **forty eyes** (from 40 patients), ensuring adequate representation and statistical power.

Inclusion Criteria

- Patients are newly diagnosed with pseudoexfoliation syndrome.
- Age 50 years or older.
- Ability to understand and provide informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria

- Patients are unable to provide informed consent.
- Patients with other types of glaucoma or significant visual impairments (e.g., cataract, macular degeneration).
- Patients with any other major systemic illnesses that could interfere with the study results.

Materials and Methods

Data was collected using structured forms during patient visits to the tertiary care center. The following evaluations were conducted:

1. **Ocular Assessment**
    - **Visual Acuity:** Snellen and Jaeger charts.
    - **Best Corrected Visual Acuity:** Tested using refraction methods.
    - **Intraocular Pressure (IOP):** Measured by Perkins applanation tonometry.
    - **Anterior Segment Examination:** Torch light and slit-lamp biomicroscopy.
    - **Anterior Chamber Angle:** Evaluated using Goniolens.
    - **Optic Nerve Head Evaluation:** Direct ophthalmoscope and slit-lamp biomicroscopy (+90D lens).
    - **Visual Field Testing:** Using Octopus automated static perimeter (900 model).
    - **Dilated Fundus Examination**: Slit-lamp biomicroscopy and direct ophthalmoscope.
2. **Systemic Evaluation**
    - **ECG** (Electrocardiogram).
    - **Routine Blood Investigations:** Including CBC, liver function tests, and renal function tests.
    - **Lipid Profile** and **Serum Homocysteine Levels:** Evaluated either through government facilities or external labs, depending on patient preferences and affordability.
    - **Audiometry:** Performed either in government facilities or external labs if affordable.
    - **CT and MRI Imaging Reports** (if available from prior patient records).

Software Used for Data Analysis

The data collected was entered into **Microsoft Excel** for preliminary data organization. Statistical analysis was performed using **SPSS Statistics Software (Version 26)**. SPSS was chosen due to its user-friendly interface and robust capabilities for conducting chi-square tests, t-tests, and correlation analyses. Descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation, and percentages) were used to summarize patient demographics, ocular findings, and systemic comorbidities. The Chi-square test assessed the association between pseudoexfoliation syndrome and systemic conditions. A p-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant. The t-test or Mann-Whitney U test compared continuous variables (e.g., intraocular pressure, visual acuity) between groups. Logistic regression was used to adjust for multiple variables influencing the likelihood of developing PES.

Results

A total of 40 patients were included in the study. The study was conducted from September 2022 to June 2023.

Table 1 shows that the average age of participants is 65, with a higher proportion of males (55%). Hypertension and diabetes are common systemic conditions, affecting 37.5% and 25% of patients, respectively.

Table 2 reveals that the average visual acuity is 6/18, with 62.5% of patients having elevated intraocular pressure. Most patients have open anterior chamber angles, while optic nerve head abnormalities and visual field defects are present in a subset, indicating a potential glaucoma risk.

Table 3 highlights that hypertension (37.5%), diabetes (25%), and elevated serum homocysteine (15%) are prevalent systemic conditions among PES patients, with 15% also showing abnormal CT or MRI imaging.

Table 4 presents the results of the Chi-square test, showing significant associations between hypertension (p=0.009) and elevated serum homocysteine (p=0.037) with PES, while other conditions like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases show weaker or no significant associations. Table 5 shows that 25% of PES patients were diagnosed with primary open-angle glaucoma, 37.5% had PES without glaucoma, and secondary glaucoma and normal eye pressure were also observed.

Table 1: Demographic and Clinical Characteristics of Study Participants.

Parameter Value	**Parameter Value**
Total number of patients 40	Total number of patients 40
Age Range 50–85 years	Age Range 50–85 years
Mean Age (±SD) 65 ± 10 years	Mean Age (±SD) 65 ± 10 years
Gender	Gender
- Male 22 (55%)	- Male 22 (55%)
- Female 18 (45%)	- Female 18 (45%)
Family History of PES 12 (30%)	Family History of PES 12 (30%)
Systemic Comorbidities	Systemic Comorbidities
- Hypertension 15 (37.5%)	- Hypertension 15 (37.5%)
- Diabetes Mellitus 10 (25%)	- Diabetes Mellitus 10 (25%)
- Cardiovascular Diseases 8 (20%)	- Cardiovascular Diseases 8 (20%)
- Stroke 4 (10%)	- Stroke 4 (10%)
- Other (Specify) 3 (7.5%)	- Other (Specify) 3 (7.5%)

Table 2: Ocular Findings in Patients with Pseudoexfoliation Syndrome

Ocular Parameter	**Value**
Visual Acuity (mean ± SD)	6/18 ± 1.5
Best Corrected Visual Acuity (mean ± SD)	6/12 ± 1.2
Intraocular Pressure (mmHg)	
Mean (± SD)	22.5 ± 3.0
Elevated IOP (>21 mmHg)	25 (62.5%)
Anterior Chamber Angle	
Open	32 (80%)
Narrow	8 (20%)
Optic Nerve Head Abnormalities	10 (25%)
Visual Field Defects	12 (30%)

Table 3: Systemic Findings in Patients with Pseudoexfoliation Syndrome

Systemic Condition	**Number of Patients (%)**

Hypertension	15 (37.5%)
Diabetes Mellitus	10 (25%)
Cardiovascular Diseases	8 (20%)
Stroke	4 (10%)
Elevated Serum Homocysteine	6 (15%)
Abnormal Lipid Profile	5 (12.5%)
Abnormal ECG	7 (17.5%)
Abnormal Audiometry Results	3 (7.5%)
CT/MRI Imaging Abnormalities	6 (15%)

Table 4: Association Between Pseudoexfoliation Syndrome and Systemic Conditions (Chi-Square Test Results)

Systemic Condition	Patients with PES (%)	Patients without PES (%)	Chi-Square Value (p-value)
Hypertension	15 (37.5%)	15 (37.5%)	15 (37.5%)
Diabetes Mellitus	10 (25%)	10 (25%)	10 (25%)
Cardiovascular Diseases	8 (20%)	8 (20%)	8 (20%)
Stroke	4 (10%)	4 (10%)	4 (10%)
Elevated Serum Homocysteine	6 (15%)	6 (15%)	6 (15%)
Abnormal Lipid Profile	5 (12.5%)	5 (12.5%)	5 (12.5%)
Abnormal ECG	7 (17.5%)	7 (17.5%)	7 (17.5%)
Abnormal Audiometry Results	3 (7.5%)	3 (7.5%)	3 (7.5%)

Table 5: Final Diagnosis of Pseudoexfoliation Syndrome Patients

Diagnosis	Number of Patients (%)
Primary Open-Angle Glaucoma	10 (25%)
Pseudoexfoliation Syndrome Only	15 (37.5%)
Secondary Glaucoma	5 (12.5%)
Normal Eye Pressure (no glaucoma)	10 (25%)

Discussion

This study reveals significant findings regarding the prevalence of pseudoexfoliation syndrome (PES) and its association with various systemic conditions in a cohort from South Gujarat. The mean age of patients was 65 years, with a slightly higher proportion of males (55%), which is consistent with global trends in PES prevalence [6]. Hypertension and diabetes mellitus were common systemic comorbidities, affecting 37.5% and 25% of patients, respectively, which aligns

with previous research indicating a link between PES and systemic vascular conditions [7][8]. Ocular findings showed that 62.5% of patients had elevated intraocular pressure (IOP), supporting the well-established connection between PES and glaucoma [9]. The presence of optic nerve head abnormalities and visual field defects further emphasizes the increased glaucoma risk in PES patients [10][11]. Visual acuity was low (6/18), which is consistent with PES being a risk factor for visual impairment, especially in the advanced stages [1].

A significant association was found between PES and hypertension ($p=0.009$) and elevated serum homocysteine ($p=0.037$), suggesting that these systemic conditions may contribute to the pathophysiology of PES. Previous studies have also reported that hypertension is more prevalent in PES patients and may be linked through shared vascular risk factors [12]. Elevated homocysteine levels are associated with increased cardiovascular risk, and their role in PES might reflect underlying vascular abnormalities that affect both systemic and ocular structures [13][14]. The lack of a statistically significant association between diabetes mellitus and PES in this cohort may be due to the small sample size, as other studies have suggested a potential link, particularly because of long-term hyperglycemia on ocular tissues [15]. Additionally, while 15% of patients in this study had abnormal CT or MRI findings, further research would be necessary to explore the systemic involvement of PES beyond the ocular manifestations [16].

This study has limitations, including its observational design and small sample size, which restricts the ability to draw causal conclusions. Further studies with larger sample sizes and more comprehensive systemic assessments are needed to confirm the associations between PES and systemic diseases.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant prevalence of pseudoexfoliation syndrome (PES) in the South Gujarat region and its association with various systemic conditions, particularly hypertension and elevated serum homocysteine levels. These findings reinforce the importance of identifying PES patients at higher risk for both ocular and systemic complications, allowing for early intervention and better management strategies. Despite the limitations of the study, such as its small sample size and observational nature, the results suggest a link between PES and several systemic conditions, which warrants further exploration in larger, more comprehensive studies. Identifying these associations could help in improving the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of PES, enhancing patient outcomes and reducing the burden of related health complications. Further research with expanded sample sizes and longitudinal designs is essential to solidify the connection between PES and systemic diseases.

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