



What's New in Ophthalmology Today?

PREDICTING ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Patients with probable Alzheimer's have an identifiable pattern of nerve fiber loss in their retinas. They also have an abnormal blood flow rate and narrowing of the column of blood in the retinal veins. These two recent findings reported in Ophthalmology Times, 31:17 are unique in patients with Alzheimer's disease. Furthermore, these results "may provide important implications for the early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease." These two studies were done at Harvard Medical School. Fatmire Bashira MD, using Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT), demonstrated that patients with normal appearing nerves and early Alzheimer's disease lost the superior nerve fibers. Other diseases tend to thin the inferior fibers. Gilbert T. Feke, Ph.D., also from Harvard Medical School, using a retinal laser Doppler blood flow instrument demonstrated "abnormalities in the retinal circulation of patient's with Alzheimer's disease. It is likely that the mechanisms producing reduced blood flow in the retina are related to those that produce the cerebral blood flow abnormalities in patients with Alzheimer's disease", he said. He also found that patient's with Alzheimer's disease had reduced vision. Both of these scientists felt that these findings were important in helping to make the early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. They could also help in determining if treatments for the disease are working. The eye is a window to the brain, and through it we can search for a cure.

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