

Keep an Eye on your Eyes

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EYES are considered as the window of the mind and certainly should be considered as the window of the body as well. Many of the systemic diseases are first diagnosed by the Ophthalmologist; as inside of the eyes can be seen with the help of the Ophthalmoscope.

Changes in the eye should be constantly awaited and watched as one can diagnose and treat general diseases at an early date.

Throughout life eyes can be affected by various pathogenes. Many factors in an expectant mother influence the eye of the foetus. The first trimester of pregnancy should be treated especially with care and even mild infection of throat or fever should get maximum attention. If mother gets German measles or rubella it can produce lesions like congenital cataract, heart defects and deafness. Lack of nutrition, loss of blood, intake of drugs like heavy metals, sulphonamide, tetracyclines in first trimester can also bring about congenital lesions.

Toxaemia of pregnancy in the last trimester which can cause death of mother and foetus can be diagnosed and its serious nature assessed by fundus examinations and can act as a guiding factor for the termination of pregnancy.

Nutrition of the body is very vital for general well-being, intelligence and shiny bright eyes. Deficient nutrition may manifest itself in the eye though no changes may be seen in the other organs. Vit-A deficiency in children is very common in our country and produces changes like night blindness, long and straight lashes, muddy conjunctiva, lustreless cornea which may turn into keratomalacia and perforation of cornea. Keratomalacia in utero is reported in

foetus born to mothers who had deficiency of Vitamin A, Vitamin B and its complex factors give rise to eye-muscle weakness, ocular muscle palsy, optic neuritis and optic atrophy which produces serious loss of vision. Iron is an element necessary for general health, the requirement of which increases in the growing age and pregnancy. Its deficiency produces anaemia and results in eye muscle weakness, haemorrhages inside the eye and retina giving rise to loss of vision. Malnutrition, therefore, affects the eyes in various proportions especially so in children. This can be prevented as the socio-economic condition of the individuals is raised and thus the percentage of the blind population can be reduced. Blindness is one of the most dreaded incident and its burden on the family and society need not be overemphasised.

Infection by organism in any part of the body can act as an endogenous toxin and gives rise to allergic manifestation in the eye. This includes lesions like phlyctenular ophthalmia, iridocyclitis, episcleritis, scleritis, metastatic retinitis, opticneuritis, etc.

Gonococcal infection deserves mention as it is used to produce ophthalmia neonatorum. With the ante-natal clinics and prophylactic treatment all over the country, incidence of this is much less although bacterial infection with staphylococcus, and streptococcus, pneumococcus still produce this type of infection in the new born leading to blindness.

Tubercular lesions of the eye in our country is still common and produce disastrous results after iridocyclitis, optic neuritis and optic atrophy.

Viral lesions of the eye are get-

ting commoner as one eliminates the bacterial infections. Smallpox and trachoma are the two main virus infections which produce blindness. Viral conjunctivitis which can occur in the epidemic form causes great loss to the nation because many people will be incapacitated at the same time in offices, hospitals, factories etc.

Of the general diseases hypertension and diabetes deserve special mention. To start with, diabetes mellitus may produce only ocular symptom like repeated attacks of styes, or haemorrhages into the eyes, such as retinal haemorrhage, vitreous haemorrhage, sudden ocular muscle palsy. The urine of affected persons should always be examined for sugar, or blood sugar should be checked.

Hypertension is another disease which can come to the notice of the Ophthalmologist first. The changes in the calibre of the retinal vessels which can be seen by an Ophthalmologist indicates the state of vessels in the brain. They are privileged to see inside of an organ unlike other specialists. The presence of haemorrhages, exudates on the retina, papilloedema are great prognostic signs.

Headache is a common ailment and many people go to the Clinic and many do not, taking it to be a minor health problem. Though only few cases are due to ocular causes, one should try to eliminate other aetiological factors even when they come to an Ophthalmologist. Cases of hypertension, brain tumour, can be detected in this manner and if seen and treated at an early date, patient can lead a healthy and fruitful life.

The above statements give one an idea how eyes reflect the general health of the individual. As my teacher put it when a person examines eye, one should examine right eye, left eye and the person behind it.

Eyes, therefore, are precious organs of the body and should be treated with care, gentleness and alertness which it deserves.