

Open Book

Learning from close calls and adverse events

Triage of patient with post-procedure ophthalmic symptoms in the emergency department

This report aims to alert providers to the key findings of a recent review, with emphasis on the changes implemented to prevent recurrence. Providers are advised to consider this report, and whether the changes made are relevant to their own systems.

This report is relevant to:

- emergency department staff
- ophthalmology specialists.

Incident

A patient presented in the emergency department (ED) with eye discomfort and reduced vision three days after an ophthalmology procedure, but the complications were not immediately recognised as potentially serious.

Chronology

- The patient had received an intraocular injection of Avastin® (monoclonal antibody) three days prior to attendance at ED.
- No visual acuity was performed at ED, and the patient was given a non-urgent triage category.
- ED became extremely busy, and the patient self-discharged after four hours of waiting without having been seen.
- The following day, the patient returned to ED, and was seen after two hours.
- The patient was referred to an ophthalmologist, and subsequently transferred to a tertiary hospital.

Actions subsequently taken

- A protocol was developed covering (i) patients who present in ED within a week of an ophthalmology procedure and (ii) specific education of ED staff on ophthalmology.
- Nursing staff are permitted to contact ophthalmology specialist staff directly if ED medical staff are unable to assess the patient within 30 minutes of presentation.
- All patients presenting with eye injury or eye pain are to have a visual acuity test within 30 minutes of presentation in ED.

Health Quality & Safety Commission comment

- Since 2013, three incidents relating to assessment in ED of symptoms post-ophthalmic surgery have been reported to the Commission as serious adverse events.
- Auckland Eye recently released the Auckland Eye Manual as a free download (Apple or Android) – www.aucklandeye.co.nz/About-Us/The-Auckland-Eye-Manual). The manual covers ophthalmic history and examination, and includes flowcharts of common ophthalmic signs and symptoms.