PHOTO ESSAY

Retinal hamartomas respond to everolimus treatment for tuberous sclerosis: A photo essay

Karin Herscu1, Roni Cohen2, Inbal Man-Peles1, Shalom Michowiz3, Nitza Goldenberg-Cohen1,4,5*

1Department of Ophthalmology, Bnai Zion Medical Center, Haifa, Israel, 2Pediatric Neurology, Schneider Children’s Medical Center of Israel, Petach Tikva, Israel, 3Department of Neurosurgery, Rabin Medical Center – Beilinson Hospital, Petach Tikva, Israel, 4Bruce and Ruth Rappaport Faculty of Medicine, Technion Institute, Haifa, Israel, 5The Krieger Eye Research Laboratory, Felsenstein Medical Research Center, Beilinson Hospital, Petach Tikva, Israel

Abstract

**Background:** Tuberous sclerosis is characterized by hamartomas in multiple organs including retinal hamartomas. Everolimus is a novel treatment for tuberous sclerosis-related lesions. We present a case where everolimus led to lesion shrinkage, the skin tuberomas, as well as the retinal hamartomas, indicating that its effect can be detected, measured, and monitored with an ocular examination.

**Case Report:** We describe a 24-year-old female diagnosed with tuberous sclerosis since birth, with multiorgan involvement. The patients had multiorgan involvement, with angiolipomas of the kidney resistant to treatment. She also underwent subependymal giant cell astrocytoma brain tumor resection. The patient was treated with everolimus after recurrent embolization failed to shrink the renal angiolipomas. The tumors responded well to treatment.

**Conclusions:** Skin lesions disappeared, and fundus photos and repeat retinal optical coherence tomography measurements documented shrinkage of the retinal hamartomas during the 24 months of treatment. We conclude that a simple eye examination can monitor treatment effectiveness.

Key words: Tuberous sclerosis, retinal hamartomas, everolimus, mammalian target of rapamycin inhibitor, subependymal giant cell astrocytoma

*Address for correspondence:*
Nitza Goldenberg-Cohen,
Department of Ophthalmology, Bnai Zion, Medical Center, Haifa 3339419, Israel.
Phone: +972-4-835 9421. Fax: +972-4-8359275.
E-mail: ncohen1@gmail.com

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**Background**

Tuberous sclerosis is a systemic disorder characterized by hamartomas in multiple organs.[1] Retinal hamartomas are one of its manifestations. Everolimus (mammalian target of rapamycin [mTOR] inhibitor) is a new treatment modality for tuberous sclerosis-related lesions, indicated for the treatment of subependymal giant cell astrocytomas (SEGA) or renal angiomylipomas.[2] The mutations underlying tuberous sclerosis are TSC1 or TSC2, resulting in activation of mTOR which promotes cell proliferation.[1] Therefore, mTOR inhibition, as everolimus, is the rationale for treating these patients.

Although retinal hamartomas in patients with tuberous sclerosis are usually stable and are not vision threatening, some hamartomas may progress. In the past, laser treatment was presented as a treatment option, with limited success. Treatment with sirolimus was shown to reduce retinal hamartomas in a series of seven patients,[3] and a recent publication also showed retinal astrocytoma regression in response to everolimus.[4]

The aim of this report is to show an easy non-interventional method of monitoring response to treatment, using repeated eye examinations and optical coherence tomography (OCT) measurements of retinal hamartomas.

**Case Report**

We describe a 24-year-old female diagnosed with tuberous sclerosis since birth, with multiorgan involvement, including rhabdomyoma of the heart, SEGA that was successfully resected, and angiolipomas of the kidney. Ocular history included hyperopic anisometropia amblyopia, operated residual esotropia, and retinal hamartomas [Figure 1].
Genetic analysis revealed a mutation p.ARG759 c.2275A-T which was absent in both parents. The patient was treated with everolimus after recurrent embolization failed to shrink the renal angiolipomas (lesion size over 3 cm is an indication for treatment). The dosage was started at 2.5 mg and was gradually increased to 12 mg. Repeat ophthalmological examination showed stable visual acuity of 20/30 and 20/40 with normal optic nerve function.

Fundus photos and repeat retinal OCT measurements documented shrinkage of the hamartomas during the 24 months of treatment [Figure 2].

**Discussion and Conclusions**

Herein, we describe the response to the treatment of retinal hamartomas in a patient diagnosed with tuberous sclerosis, showing multorgan involvement.

The novelty of our observation is that although treatment was targeted at the renal angiomylipoma, everolimus also led to a significant shrinkage of face tuberomas and the retinal astrocytic lesions shown clearly on OCT. We hypothesize that there may be a correlation between the regression of these lesions and the regression of lesions in other organs such as brain or kidney.
Furthermore, the visual fundus examination, which is known for detecting retinal hamartomas since 2006, and relatively available measurements using OCT may be valuable tools for monitoring treatment efficacy. We encourage the collaboration of multidisciplinary clinicians to monitor Tuberous sclerosis (TS) patients with internal organs involvement, using fundus eye examination and OCT.

References