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EPIRETINAL MEMBRANE

Retina is the light sensitive membrane of the back of the eye. Macula is the most sensitive part of the retina and provides you with central, reading or sharp vision.

An epiretinal membrane (ERM) involves the macula. An ERM is a layer of scar tissue developing on the surface of the macula. This scar tissue contracts with time, resulting in folds or ripples in the macula. The effect is similar to crumpling up the film in an old fashioned camera with resultant blurring or distortion of vision.

TREATMENT OF EPIRETINAL MEMBRANE

Your surgeon has suggested surgery to remove the ERM and in doing so to try and reduce the amount of distortion in your vision. This is done in two stages. The procedure initially involves removing a small part of the vitreous which is the jelly like substance within the cavity of the eyeball. This process is called VITRECTOMY. A small cut is made outside the eye to enable access. The second stage involves peeling away the ERM. At the end of the process the small incisions are stitched up and a protective pad and shield is placed on the eye.

THE ANAESTHETIC

If you have a local anaesthetic you will be awake during the procedure having had numbing injection around the eye. After the local anaesthetic you will not be able to see anything. The eye is immobile and it is necessary to lie still for about ONE HOUR. During the operation if you need to alert the surgeon you can squeeze a squeaky toy which will be provided.

If you have a general anaesthetic you will not be able to eat for 8 hours before the surgery or drink 4 hours before the surgery. It is routine to take a blood test and an ECG test to enable the anaesthetist to check you have no underlying conditions that might cause a problem during the general anaesthetic. You will be taken to the theatre anaesthetic room where the anaesthetist will give you an injection in your hand or arm and you will drift off to sleep. During the operation your heart rate, breathing, blood pressure and oxygen levels will be monitored.

GAS IN THE EYE

In 5% of cases it is necessary to place a gas bubble inside the eye to secure the tension internally so that a retinal hole or detachment does not occur. If this happens you will need to **Posture**.

AFTER YOUR OPERATION

- Following the operation you can experience some discomfort in your eye.
- Your eye will feel uncomfortable, gritty, and itchy and might appear red or bruised – this is normal for seven to 14 days
- The eye takes two to six weeks to heal, but the vision may continue to improve for several months
- Take paracetamol for pain relief every four to six hours but do not take aspirin as this drug can cause bleeding
- Occasionally there is some bruising.

- You will be required to put eye drops in the operated eye for at least TWO WEEKS to reduce any inflammation, to rest the eye and to prevent infection. If you run short of the drops you should contact your GP .
- You will be reviewed in clinic about two weeks after the operation
- Please don't rub your eye

You should also ring Mr Manuchehri's secretary on 01296 434352 or 07835 977069 if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Excessive pain
- Loss of vision
- Increased redness

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Complications are not generally common and in most cases treated effectively. Very rarely some complications result in blindness.

DURING THE OPERATION

- Bleeding inside the eye
- Further retinal holes following surgery

AFTER THE OPERATION

- Bruising of the eye or eyelids
- Raised pressure inside the eye
- Inflammation inside the eye
- Double vision
- Allergy to drops used
- Infection: very rare but can give rise to serious loss of sight
- The likelihood of getting a cataract (where the lens in your eye becomes cloudy) increases after a vitrectomy, so you might need surgery for this condition sometime in the future.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER TREATMENT?

After surgery it generally takes some months for the vision to recover. If gas was used you will find the vision very blurred immediately afterwards and is likely to remain until the gas is absorbed. Surgery usually improves the vision in the affected eye, but it will never be completely normal

WHAT IMPROVEMENT IN MY VISION CAN I EXPECT AFTER THE OPERATION?

After an epiretinal membrane is removed, vision gradually improves over a period of three to six months in 70%-80% of patients. However, in some cases vision may not improve following surgery, due to damage already caused by the membrane. In about 10% of patients, the membrane may return, which will cause the visual problems to recur.