

## Congenital Glaucoma causing Blindness in a Child: Responsibility of a Witch Doctor

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**Abstract:** Congenital glaucoma is a challenging disease both for ophthalmologists and parents. It is a sight-threatening disease if not diagnosed early and treated in an appropriate way. Present at birth, it may be overlooked by medical practitioners. The only effective treatment is surgery. Witch doctors cannot cure the disease; conversely they compromise the prognosis.

**Keywords:** Congenital, glaucoma, Blindness, witch doctor.

### INTRODUCTION

Ophthalmologists throughout the world are faced with the diagnostic and therapeutic challenge of primary congenital glaucoma. Often, infants present with the classic triad of blepharospasm, epiphora, and photophobia [1]. It is present at birth and is characterized by improper development of the eye's aqueous outflow system. Increased intraocular pressure (IOP) results and subsequent damage to ocular structures and vision loss occurs [2].

Primary congenital glaucoma is responsible for 0.01-0.04% of total blindness and 5% of childhood blindness. It is an unusual, inherited anomaly of trabecular meshwork and anterior chamber angle which leads to obstruction of aqueous outflow IOP, and optic nerve damage [3].

Congenital glaucoma must be diagnosed and treated as soon as possible so as to avoid blindness. We present a case that was diagnosed very late, because a witch doctor "detained" the patient till he became blind.

### CASE REPORT

A 15-month-old male baby was brought to our office by his mother for "blind attitude". He was term baby and was delivered vaginally in a local infirmary. He had no family history of glaucoma. 3 months after his birth, he was taken to the witch doctor because of "cloudy eyes", ever since the witch doctor put him

under traditional decoction. On examination with hand held slit lamp, the child had no fixation and pursuit of light. Both eyes were enlarged with corneal opacification. The horizontal corneal diameter of the right eye was 15 mm while in the left it was 16 mm. The IOP was 33 mmHg in the right eye and 35 mmHg in the left eye. The ocular fundus was not reachable because of the corneal opacification. As the blindness was irreversible, the child was put under eye drops notably the association Dorzolamide-Timoptol, one drop twice daily, then was scheduled for routine follow up.



Fig-1: Showing the child with congenital glaucoma both eyes.

## **DISCUSSION**

Characteristically, the patients presenting with congenital glaucoma are male (65%) with bilateral involvement (70%) and diagnosed within the first year of life (80%) [1]. Depending on when treatment is instituted, visual acuity may be reduced and/or visual fields may be restricted. In untreated cases, blindness invariably occurs [4]. In the current case, the child was brought very late to our office; his parents went first to the witch doctor who kept him maybe by ignorance or because of his greed for money.

Medical therapy is accorded a supportive role; definitive treatment is surgical [5]. In the case presented here, the child underwent medical therapy because the aim was to lower the IOP without any improvement of the visual acuity.

Appropriate and timely diagnosis and treatment can dramatically alter the course of disease and restore visual development [6]. The sight of the child would have been saved if he was admitted into our office earlier. About the blindness of this child, the witch doctor must be held accountable, for he administered in his eyes a traditional medication of unknown nature. Also, instead of sending him to the ophthalmologist for an early diagnosis and treatment he kept him till he lost his sight.

## **CONCLUSION**

Congenital glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness in children. The only effective treatment is surgery that needs to be performed as soon as a timely diagnosis is made. Parents must be sensitized on this issue. Also legal actions have to be taken against naive witch doctors.

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