THE PATHOGENESIS OF OPTIC NERVE DRUSEN: AN HYPOTHESIS

Joel G. Sacks, Richard B. O'Grady, Earl Choromokos and Jan Leestma

We had the opportunity of examining at autopsy the eyes of a young man who died from the rupture of an intracranial aneurysm. Prior to death he had a well documented pseudopapilledema: the discs were not engorged and repeated fluorescein retinal angiograms showed no leakage from the disc.

On histologic examination we found the expected bruied drusen as well as drusen-like material in the perivascular spaces. These resembled precipitates known to occur in other parts of the brain in certain vascular disease.

We, therefore, reviewed the fluorescein retinal angiograms of 53 eyes with known drusen of the discs and found statistically significant anomalies of the disc vasculature as compared with a control group. The abnormalities included an increased number of large blood vessels, "circumflex vessels, and increased capillarity."