

DELAYED ONSET MACULAR HOLE FOLLOWING UNCOMPLICATED PHACOEMULSIFICATION

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Purpose: This case report explores the discovery of a macular hole one year after an uneventful phacoemulsification procedure. The delayed onset of this macular pathology challenges conventional postoperative expectations and highlights the need for ongoing vigilance in the long-term follow-up of cataract surgery.

Clinical Case:

A 72-year-old male presented with a sudden decline in vision in the left eye, more than one year after uncomplicated phacoemulsification. Initial postoperative assessments at 1, 3, and 6 months revealed no apparent macular pathology with visual acuity to be 10/10 with no correction.

Despite the absence of early postoperative complications, the patient's complaint of persistent visual disturbances prompted further investigation. Optical coherence tomography (OCT) at the one-year mark unveiled the presence of a macular hole, a delayed diagnosis marking a surprising turn in the patient's post-phacoemulsification course. Examination of potential risk factors, including patient demographics, surgical technique, and postoperative care, was undertaken. The identification of subtle changes in the retinal architecture on retrospective review raised questions about the underlying contributing factors. The patient had no history of floaters or symptoms of posterior vitreous detachment (PVD) before the surgery. Pre-surgery OCT was not available and so the possibility of PVD beforehand cannot be examined. However, PVD with slight vitreomacular traction (VMT) can be seen at the 6-month hallmark post-surgery OCT. Given the progression of the macular hole and its impact on visual acuity the patient was referred to a retina specialist for pars plana vitrectomy and internal limiting membrane peeling with gas tamponade to facilitate hole closure.

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Conclusion: The delayed onset of a macular hole, while rare, highlights the importance of comprehensive postoperative monitoring beyond the immediate 1-month recovery period. Delayed-onset macular hole post-phacoemulsification, though infrequent, should be considered in cases of unexplained visual deterioration.

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