Phacoanaphylactic Endophthalmitis

Phacoanaphylactic endophthalmitis is an uncommon but distressing complication of extracapsular cataract surgery. Its severity may seriously threaten the visual function of the eye. In recent decades, phacoanaphylaxis has been encountered most frequently following penetrating trauma of the globe. However, new interest in extracapsular techniques could conceivably spawn an outbreak of this complication.

In this issue of OPHTHALMIC SURGERY, Hodes and Stern describe an ultrasonographic technique which was useful in supporting the diagnosis of phacoanaphylactic endophthalmitis following inadvertent extracapsular cataract extraction. In addition, in an article by Smith and Weiner, phacoanaphylaxis following a phacoemulsification is documented. Current techniques for diagnosis and management of this condition are reviewed.

The ophthalmologist who joins the growing ranks of eye surgeons performing extracapsular cataract surgery in one of its many forms should be aware of the existence of this complication. One must be ready to differentiate it from inflammatory states of infectious etiology, and should be familiar with appropriate forms of therapy.

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