

DEFINITION

1. The **vitreous humour** is an inert, jelly-like structure which fills the vitreous chamber. This chamber is situated behind the lens.

CLASSIFICATION & AETIOLOGY

2. Vitreous opacities may be developmental or degenerative.
3. **Developmental** opacities are located in Cloquet's canal and are remnants of the hyaloid system. They are present, by definition, from birth.
4. **Degenerative** opacities are of three types –
 - 4.1. **Asteroid Hyalosis.** This is characterised by spherical white bodies in the vitreous cavity. There is a genetic relationship with diabetes and hypercholesterolaemia. It is unilateral in the majority of cases and affects both sexes, usually in the elderly. It is asymptomatic.
 - 4.2. **Synchisis Scintillans** is a degenerative condition which leads to deposition of cholesterol crystals in the vitreous. These crystals are also found in the anterior chamber and subretinal space. It affects damaged eyes which have suffered trauma or inflammatory disease in the past. The crystals are multicoloured glittering particles which settle in the lower part of the vitreous cavity due to gravity, but can be thrown up by eye movements to form a shower or iridescence.
 - 4.3. **Amyloid Degeneration.** Amyloid degeneration is a rare systemic disease and amyloid material is deposited in various organs of the body. It is a heredo-familial syndrome transmitted as a Mendelian dominant. The ocular signs consist of diplopia, loss of vision, external ophthalmoplegia, vitreous opacities, retinal haemorrhages and exudates. Both eyes are involved and the vitreous becomes opaque.

CONCLUSION

5. Vitreous opacities may be developmental or degenerative. The various types of degenerative opacities are described above.

REFERENCE

Miller Stephen J H. Parsons' Diseases of the Eye. 18th Ed. London. Churchill Livingstone. 1990. p12, 207, 208.

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