

LETTERS

LASER REFRACTIVE EYE SURGERY

Isotretinoin as contraindication

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We wish to raise awareness of a potential hazard of laser refractive surgery and concurrent treatment with isotretinoin, an anti-acne drug.¹ Acne affects 85-90% of the population at some time, and the age of patients affected by acne overlaps that of patients undergoing laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis (LASIK). Dry eye is a side effect of both LASIK and isotretinoin²⁻³ and can result in serious sequelae such as corneal ulceration, infection, and loss of vision.

Thus, LASIK is contraindicated in patients taking isotretinoin,⁴ but this fact is not well recognised, especially among British dermatologists who prescribe isotretinoin. Previous surveys have highlighted the need to routinely screen for isotretinoin use before approving LASIK and have concluded that patients should wait six months after a course of isotretinoin before having refractive eye surgery.⁵

We recently surveyed the British Association of Dermatologists, and found that 65% did not know whether any of their patients had undergone LASIK while taking isotretinoin, only 30% inquired about recent or forthcoming surgery, and 89% were

unaware that isotretinoin may cause ocular problems if a patient had undergone LASIK in the preceding six months.

Patients should avoid isotretinoin six months before or after LASIK treatment. Similarly, LASIK practitioners should check that isotretinoin has not been taken for six months before laser refractive eye surgery.

Competing interests: None declared.

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