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40 **ABSTRACT**

41 **Purpose:** To determine classification criteria for sympathetic ophthalmia

42 **Design:** Machine learning of cases with sympathetic ophthalmia and 5 other panuveitides.

43 **Methods:** Cases of panuveitides were collected in an informatics-designed preliminary
44 database, and a final database was constructed of cases achieving supermajority agreement on
45 the diagnosis, using formal consensus techniques. Cases were split into a learning set and a
46 validation set. Machine learning using multinomial logistic regression was used on the learning
47 set to determine a parsimonious set of criteria that minimized the misclassification rate among
48 the intermediate uveitides. The resulting criteria were evaluated on the validation set.

49 **Results:** Nine hundred sixteen of cases panuveitides, including 110 cases of sympathetic
50 ophthalmia, were evaluated by machine learning. The overall accuracy for panuveitides was
51 96.3% in the learning set (95% confidence interval [CI] 94.8, 97.5) and 94.0% in the validation
52 set (95% CI 89.0, 96.8). Key criteria for sympathetic ophthalmia included bilateral uveitis with 1)
53 a history of unilateral ocular trauma or surgery and 2) an anterior chamber and vitreous
54 inflammation or a panuveitis with choroidal involvement. The misclassification rates for
55 sympathetic ophthalmia were 4.2 % in the learning set and 6.7% in the validation set,
56 respectively.

57 **Conclusions:** The criteria for sympathetic ophthalmia had a low misclassification rate and
58 appeared to perform sufficiently well for use in clinical and translational research.

59 **PRECIS**

60 Using a formalized approach to developing classification criteria, including informatics-
61 based case collection, consensus-technique-based case selection, and machine learning,
62 classification criteria for sympathetic ophthalmia were developed. Key criteria included bilateral
63 uveitis with a history of unilateral ocular trauma or surgery and either anterior chamber and
64 vitreous inflammation or panuveitis with choroidal involvement. The resulting criteria had a low
65 misclassification rate.

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66 Bilateral inflammation after unilateral eye trauma or surgery was first termed sympathetic
67 ophthalmia by Mackenzie in 1840.¹ The ocular inflammation begins weeks to months or even
68 years after an initiating traumatic ocular event, either physical trauma (most often a penetrating
69 ocular injury) or intraocular surgery. The patient then develops bilateral inflammation in both the
70 injured “exciting” eye and in the fellow “sympathizing” eye. Classically, sympathetic ophthalmia
71 was described as a “granulomatous” (i.e. with mutton fat keratic precipitates) panuveitis, but
72 with the advent of modern therapy, full-blown disease may not always be seen. Hence some
73 patients may not have “granulomatous” features and may have minimal anterior chamber
74 inflammation.²⁻⁷

75 Sympathetic ophthalmia is a rare disease, which has been declining in incidence. It is
76 estimated to occur in 0.02% to 0.05% of cases of ocular trauma and 0.01% of cases of ocular
77 surgery, typically multiple ocular surgeries, particularly vitreoretinal surgery.^{2,4} A prospective
78 surveillance study in the United Kingdom estimated the incidence as 0.03/100,000/year.⁵ In this
79 series, ocular surgery was a more frequent cause than traumatic ocular injury.⁵ Although nearly
80 all cases occur after penetrating ocular injury or intraocular surgery, sympathetic ophthalmia
81 after trans-scleral laser to the ciliary body, pan-retinal photocoagulation, and radiation therapy
82 for choroidal melanoma has been described, albeit rarely.²⁻⁷

83 Sympathetic ophthalmia is by definition a bilateral uveitis, but observation of
84 inflammation in the exciting eye may be prevented by prior enucleation, phthisis, or corneal
85 opacity. In the era before modern microsurgery and corticosteroid therapy, enucleation of the
86 injured eye typically was performed to prevent sympathetic ophthalmia, and sometimes of the
87 “exciting” eye to improve outcomes in the “sympathizing” eye (a controversial practice), but the
88 low incidence of sympathetic ophthalmia, improvements in globe-preserving surgery, and
89 improvements in therapy largely have led to discontinuation of these practices.⁵ Clinical
90 features on ocular examination include anterior chamber inflammation, keratic precipitates,
91 vitreous inflammation, multifocal choroidal infiltrates, and uncommonly serous retinal

92 detachment.²⁻⁷ The choroidal lesions present as multifocal, small, subretinal yellow-white spots,
93 and are known histologically as Dalen-Fuchs nodules. These nodules are hyperfluorescent on
94 fluorescein angiography and hypofluorescent on indocyanine green angiography.⁸ Similar
95 choroidal lesions can be seen in late-stage Vogt-Koyanagi-Harada disease, sometimes termed
96 Dalen-Fuchs-like nodules, and sarcoidosis. Optic disc edema is a recognized complication, and
97 optical coherence tomographic imaging or ultrasound may demonstrate choroidal thickening.⁸

98 The histopathology of sympathetic ophthalmia demonstrates an inflammatory infiltrate
99 with mononuclear inflammatory cells (lymphocytes and macrophages) and classically
100 multinucleated giant cells with granuloma formation. Not all cases have granuloma formation,
101 and some cases have only an inflammatory infiltrate of lymphocytes, both T and B cells. Dalen-
102 Fuchs nodules, not found in all cases, are composed of lymphocytes, histiocytes, and de-
103 pigmented retinal epithelial cells.^{9,10} HLA-DR expression can be detected on retinal pigment
104 epithelial cells,¹¹ leading to speculation about their role in the inflammatory process and as
105 possible antigen presenting cells. However, the pathologic features are similar to other
106 granulomatous eye diseases, such as sarcoidosis.¹⁰

107 The Standardization of Uveitis Nomenclature (SUN) Working Group has developed
108 classification criteria for 25 of the most common uveitides using a formal approach to
109 development and classification. Among the diseases studied was sympathetic ophthalmia.¹²⁻¹⁸

110 **Methods**

111 The SUN Developing Classification Criteria for the Uveitides project proceeded in four
112 phases as previously described: 1) informatics, 2) case collection, 3) case selection, and 4)
113 machine learning^{14-16,18}

114 *Case collection and case selection.* De-identified information was entered into the SUN
115 preliminary database by the 76 contributing investigators for each disease as previously
116 described.^{16,18} Cases in the preliminary database were reviewed by committees of 9
117 investigators for selection into the final database.^{16,18} Because the goal was to develop

118 classification criteria,¹⁷ only cases with a supermajority agreement (>75%) that the case was the
119 disease in question were retained in the final database (i.e. were “selected”).^{16,18}

120 *Machine learning.* The final database then was randomly separated into a learning set
121 (~85% of cases) and a validation set (~15% of cases) for each disease as described in the
122 accompanying article.¹⁸ Machine learning was used on the learning set to determine criteria
123 that minimized misclassification. The criteria then were tested on the validation set; for both the
124 learning set and the validation set, the misclassification rate was calculated for each disease.
125 For sympathetic ophthalmia, the diseases against which it was evaluated were: Vogt-Koyanagi-
126 Harada (VKH) disease (both early-stage and late-stage), Behçet disease uveitis, sarcoidosis-
127 associated panuveitis, syphilitic panuveitis, and tubercular panuveitis.

128 *Comparisons of subsets of cases with sympathetic ophthalmia.* Cases with and without
129 choroidal nodules (“Dalen-Fuchs nodules”) and cases with penetrating ocular trauma vs ocular
130 surgery were compared with the chi-square test or the Fisher’s exact test if a cell was <5 for
131 categorical variables and the Wilcoxon rank sum test for continuous variables. P-values were
132 nominal and two-sided.

133 The study adhered to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Institutional Review
134 Boards (IRBs) at each participating center reviewed and approved the study; the study typically
135 was considered either minimal risk or exempt by the individual IRBs.

136 **Results**

137 One hundred forty-nine cases of sympathetic ophthalmia were collected and 110 (71%)
138 achieved supermajority agreement on the diagnosis during the “selection” phase and were used
139 in the machine learning phase. These cases of sympathetic ophthalmia were compared to 806
140 cases of other uveitides, including 194 cases of Behçet disease, 156 cases of early-stage VKH,
141 103 cases of late-stage VKH, 102 cases of sarcoidosis-associated panuveitis, 70 cases of
142 syphilitic panuveitis, and 181 cases of tubercular panuveitis. The details of the machine
143 learning results for these diseases are outlined in the accompanying article.¹⁸ The

144 characteristics at presentation to a SUN Working Group Investigator of cases with sympathetic
145 ophthalmia are listed in Table 1. A comparison of cases due to multiple ocular surgeries only vs
146 those due to penetrating ocular injury is presented as Table 2. Not surprisingly, traumatic cases
147 were younger and more often male. There was an apparent shift in the distribution of vitreous
148 cells to higher grades among those with multiple ocular surgeries, but no difference in vitreous
149 haze. Cases of sympathetic ophthalmia due to multiple ocular surgeries also were more likely
150 to have exudative detachments and sunset glow fundus, although these features occurred in a
151 minority of cases in both subsets. The comparison of cases with and without choroidal nodules
152 (“Dalen-Fuchs nodules”) is presented as Table 3. Cases with choroidal nodules were more
153 likely to be chronic and have either no or mutton fat keratic precipitates. The criteria developed
154 after machine learning for sympathetic ophthalmia are listed in Table 4. The overall accuracy
155 for panuveitides was 96.3% in the learning set (95% confidence interval [CI] 94.8, 97.5) and
156 94.0% in the validation set (95% CI 89.0, 96.8).¹⁸ The misclassification rates for sympathetic
157 ophthalmia were 4.2% in the learning set and 6.7% in the validation set. The disease with
158 which SO most often was confused was tubercular panuveitis.

159 Discussion

160 The classification criteria developed by the SUN Working Group for sympathetic
161 ophthalmia have a low misclassification rate, indicating good discriminatory performance
162 against other panuveitides.

163 Sympathetic ophthalmia is considered the prototypical ocular autoimmune disease.
164 Trauma or surgery allows either exposure of an ocular antigen in a privileged site or abrogation
165 of tolerance resulting in autoimmune inflammation in both eyes.^{3,8} Injury to the eye, either
166 penetrating trauma or surgery (typically multiple surgeries), is the *sine qua non* for diagnosis.
167 Classically described as a bilateral “granulomatous” panuveitis, it has become evident that in
168 the modern treatment era the spectrum of disease is broader. Bilateral uveitis is necessary for
169 diagnosis but may not always be observable; nevertheless when both eyes can be examined,

170 bilateral disease is necessary for diagnosis. However, mutton fat keratic precipitates, which are
171 the hallmark of what clinicians call “granulomatous uveitis”, were present in a minority of
172 patients (10%), and choroidal nodules (“Dalen-Fuchs nodules”) in 63%. As such, some cases
173 with an anterior and intermediate uveitis were considered by a supermajority of the selection
174 committee to have sympathetic ophthalmia. Not surprisingly, and consistent with other reports,²⁻
175 ⁷ patients with sympathetic ophthalmia after ocular trauma were younger and more likely to be
176 male. There was a suggestion that cases of sympathetic ophthalmia after multiple ocular
177 surgeries without penetrating injury might have a more severe vitritis, as evidence by the
178 distribution of vitreous cells, but there was no difference between the two subsets in the
179 distribution of vitreous haze. Cases with choroidal nodules were more likely to be chronic,
180 suggesting that the more “severe” disease may be related to chronicity. However, no cases of
181 an isolated anterior uveitis were diagnosed as sympathetic ophthalmia. Whether sympathetic
182 ophthalmia can present as an isolated anterior uveitis cannot be addressed from these data,
183 and the criteria exclude isolated anterior uveitis as sympathetic ophthalmia at this time.

184 An overlap in clinical features between sympathetic ophthalmia and Vogt-Koyanagi-
185 Harada disease has previously been described, including exudative retinal detachments and
186 sunset glow fundus in a minority of patients with sympathetic ophthalmia,²⁻⁸ leading to
187 speculation about shared pathogenetic pathways. Indeed exudative retinal detachments (the
188 classic ocular feature of early-stage Vogt-Koyanagi-Harada disease) were present in 18% of
189 cases, and sunset glow fundus (the classic ocular feature of late-stage Vogt-Koyanagi-Harada
190 disease) in 10% of cases of sympathetic ophthalmia. In these cases, it is the history of ocular
191 trauma that distinguishes between the two diseases.

192 The presence of any of the exclusions in Table 4 suggests an alternate diagnosis, and
193 the diagnosis of sympathetic ophthalmia should not be made in their presence. In prospective
194 studies many of these tests will be performed routinely, and the alternative diagnoses excluded.
195 However, in retrospective studies based on clinical care, not all of these tests may have been

196 performed. Hence the presence of an exclusionary criterion excludes pars planitis, but the
197 absence of such testing does not always exclude the diagnosis of sympathetic ophthalmia if the
198 criteria for the diagnosis are met.

199 Classification criteria are employed to diagnose individual diseases for research
200 purposes.¹⁷ Classification criteria differ from clinical diagnostic criteria, in that although both
201 seek to minimize misclassification, when a trade-off is needed, diagnostic criteria typically
202 emphasize sensitivity, whereas classification criteria emphasize specificity,¹⁷ in order to define
203 a homogeneous group of patients for inclusion in research studies and limit the inclusion of
204 patients without the disease in question that might confound the data. The machine learning
205 process employed did not explicitly use sensitivity and specificity; instead it minimized the
206 misclassification rate. Because we were developing classification criteria and because the
207 typical agreement between two uveitis experts on diagnosis is moderate at best,¹⁶ the selection
208 of cases for the final database (“case selection”) included only cases which achieved
209 supermajority agreement on the diagnosis. As such, some cases which clinicians would
210 diagnose with sympathetic ophthalmia will not be so classified by classification criteria, such as
211 the issue of isolated anterior uveitis discussed above.

212 In conclusion, the criteria for sympathetic ophthalmia outlined in Table 4 appear to
213 perform sufficiently well for use as classification criteria in clinical research.^{17,18}

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258 **Table 1. Characteristics of Cases with Sympathetic Ophthalmia**

Characteristic	Result
Number cases	110
<i>Demographics</i>	
Age, median, years (25 th 75 th percentile)	43 (25, 59)
Gender (%)	
Men	67
Women	33
Race/ethnicity (%)	
White, non-Hispanic	61
Black, non-Hispanic	4
Hispanic	2
Asian, Pacific Islander	15
Other	9
Missing	9
<i>Uveitis History</i>	
Uveitis course (%)	
Acute, monophasic	18
Acute, recurrent	1
Chronic	72
Indeterminate	9
<i>Ophthalmic examination</i>	
Keratic precipitates (%)	
None	59
Fine	23
Round	8
Stellate	0
Mutton Fat	10
Other	0
Anterior chamber cells (%)	
Grade 0	16
½+	19
1+	25
2+	25
3+	12
4+	3
Hypopyon (%)	2
Anterior chamber flare (%)	
Grade 0	33
1+	35
2+	21
3+	9
4+	2
Iris in the sympathizing eye (%)	
Normal	83
Posterior synechiae	17
Sectoral iris atrophy	0
Patchy iris atrophy	0

Diffuse iris atrophy	0
Heterochromia	0
Intraocular pressure (IOP), involved eyes	
Median, mm Hg (25 th , 75 th percentile)	14 (10, 16)
Proportion patients with IOP>24 mm Hg either eye (%)	4
Vitreous cells (%)	
Grade 0	18
½+	25
1+	29
2+	20
3+	7
4+	1
Vitreous haze (%)	
Grade 0	48
½+	19
1+	15
2+	10
3+	5
4+	2
Exudative retinal detachment (%)	18
Sunset glow fundus (%)	10
Dalen Fuchs nodules (multifocal choroiditis) (%)	63
<i>Ocular Trauma (%)</i>	
Multiple ocular surgeries	45
Penetrating ocular injury	39
Penetrating ocular injury followed by multiple ocular surgeries	16

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Table 2. Comparison of Cases with Multiple Ocular Surgeries only vs Cases with Penetrating Ocular Injury

Characteristic	Multiple Ocular Surgeries	Penetrating Ocular Injury*	P-value
Number cases	50	60	
<i>Demographics</i>			
Age, median, years (25 th 75 th percentile)	58 (40, 71)	35 (18, 44)	<0.0001
Gender (%)			0.012
Men	54	77	
Women	46	23	
Race/ethnicity (%)			0.15
White, non-Hispanic	61	61	
Black, non-Hispanic	2	5	
Hispanic	0	3	
Asian, Pacific Islander	20	10	
Other	3	16	
Missing	14	5	
<i>Uveitis History</i>			
Uveitis course (%)			0.59
Acute, monophasic	20	18	
Acute, recurrent	1	0	
Chronic	74	70	
Indeterminate	6	12	
<i>Ophthalmic examination</i>			
Keratic precipitates (%)			0.07
None	50	66	
Fine	25	22	
Round	8	8	
Mutton Fat	18	3	
Anterior chamber cells (%)			0.41
Grade 0	10	22	
½+	16	22	
1+	30	19	
2+	28	24	
3+	14	10	
4+	2	3	
Hypopyon (%)	2	2	1.00
Anterior chamber flare (%)			0.51
Grade 0	26	39	
1+	34	36	
2+	26	17	
3+	12	7	
4+	2	2	
Iris in the sympathizing eye (%)			0.60
Normal	86	80	
Posterior synechiae	14	20	
Intraocular pressure (IOP), involved eyes			
Median, mm Hg (25 th , 75 th percentile)	14 (9, 16)	14 (10, 16)	0.92

Percent patients with IOP>24 mm Hg either eye	4	4	1.00
Vitreous cells (%)			0.01
Grade 0	12	22	
½+	12	36	
1+	46	19	
2+	24	17	
3+	6	5	
4+	0	2	
Vitreous haze (%)			0.37
Grade 0	40	54	
½+	20	19	
1+	18	14	
2+	16	5	
3+	4	7	
4+	2	2	
Exudative retinal detachment (%)	36	17	0.02
Sunset glow fundus (%)	18	2	0.01
Dalen Fuchs nodules (multifocal choroiditis) (%)	62	63	0.94

*Includes eyes with penetrating ocular injury followed by multiple ocular surgeries

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Table 3. Comparison of Cases with Choroidal (“Dalen Fuchs”) Nodules vs Cases without Choroidal Nodules

Characteristic	Choroidal Nodules	No Choroidal Nodules	P-value
Number cases	69	41	
<i>Demographics</i>			
Age, median, years (25 th 75 th percentile)	44 (23, 59)	43 (28, 60)	0.88
Gender (%)			0.39
Men	69	61	
Women	31	39	
Race/ethnicity (%)			0.24
White, non-Hispanic	70	49	
Black, non-Hispanic	5	2	
Hispanic	0	5	
Asian, Pacific Islander	9	22	
Other	10	7	
Missing	6	15	
<i>Uveitis History</i>			
Uveitis course (%)			0.01
Acute, monophasic	9	32	
Acute, recurrent	0	2	
Chronic	83	54	
Indeterminate	8	12	
<i>Ophthalmic examination</i>			
Keratic precipitates (%)			0.001
None	70	41	
Fine	13	39	
Round	4	15	
Mutton Fat	13	5	
Anterior chamber cells (%)			0.14
Grade 0	22	7	
½+	20	17	
1+	26	22	
2+	23	29	
3+	7	20	
4+	1	5	
Hypopyon (%)	3	0	0.39
Anterior chamber flare (%)			0.20
Grade 0	36	27	
1+	36	34	
2+	22	20	
3+	6	15	
4+	0	5	
Iris in the sympathizing eye (%)			0.89
Normal	84	80	
Posterior synechiae	16	20	
Intraocular pressure (IOP), involved eyes			
Median, mm Hg (25 th , 75 th percentile)	14 (10, 18)	14 (11, 16)	0.87

Proportion patients with IOP>24 mm Hg either eye	6	3	0.67
Vitreous cells (%)			0.07
Grade 0	26	5	
½+	22	29	
1+	26	34	
2+	17	24	
3+	7	7	
4+	1	0	
Vitreous haze (%)			0.58
Grade 0	49	46	
½+	16	24	
1+	13	20	
2+	12	7	
3+	7	2	
4+	3	0	
Exudative retinal detachment (%)	19	36	0.04
Sunset glow fundus (%)	10	10	1.00
<i>Ocular Trauma (%)</i>			
Multiple ocular surgeries only	46	46	1.00
Penetrating ocular injury*	54	54	1.00

*Includes cases with penetrating ocular injury followed by multiple ocular surgeries.

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265 **Table 4. Classification Criteria for Sympathetic Ophthalmia**

<p>Criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. History of unilateral ocular trauma or surgery <p>AND</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Ocular inflammation, either<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Bilateral ORb. If there is no view in the inciting eye (e.g. enucleated, phthisis, opaque cornea), then detectable inflammation in the sympathizing eye <p>AND</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Evidence of more than isolated anterior uveitis, either<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Anterior chamber and vitreous inflammation ORb. Panuveitis with choroidal involvement <p>Exclusions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Positive serology for syphilis using a treponemal test2. Evidence for sarcoidosis (either bilateral hilar adenopathy on chest imaging or tissue biopsy demonstrating non-caseating granulomata)

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