Abstract


Vitamin A deficiency due to chronic malabsorption: an ophthalmic manifestation of a systemic condition.

Cheshire J, Kolli S.

Department of Ophthalmology, Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust, Birmingham, UK; University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, Birmingham, UK.

BACKGROUND: A 47-year-old woman presented with a 4-week history of progressive loss of vision, first manifesting as night blindness. Additionally, the patient reported frequent severe episodes of diarrhoea over the past month. Her medical history included end-stage renal failure for which she was currently on haemodialysis after a failed renal transplant, chronic pancreatitis and autonomic diabetes mellitus. Ophthalmological examination revealed severe bilateral corneal xerosis, bilateral Bitot's spots and inferior ulceration of the right cornea.

FINDINGS: A diagnosis of xerophthalmia due to vitamin A deficiency was made, most likely due to the presence of small intestinal bacterial overgrowth and the patient's chronic malabsorptive state. Standard management using oral vitamin A tablets was ineffective, resulting in the patient requiring intravenous supplementation.

CONCLUSION: The extent of visual deterioration on presentation and the difficulties encountered managing the patient resulted in the patient's vision failing to improve.

PMID: 28490481