**Herpes zoster ophthalmicus**

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**Aims:**

Herpes zoster ophthalmicus (HZO) is the oculocutaneous reactivation of latent varicella-zoster virus (VZV) affecting the ophthalmic division of the trigeminal nerve. The challenge remains with timely diagnosis, institution of appropriate antiviral treatment and management of complications. We aimed to analyse the demographics, clinical features, incidence of complications and treatment practice patterns of patients with HZO referred to a tertiary eye hospital in Australia.

**Methods:**

A retrospective audit from the first 100 consecutive cases presenting to the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH) emergency department with HZO from July 2017-June 2018 was performed.

**Results:**

71% of patients referred to the RVEEH with HZO were commenced on systemic antivirals within 72 hours of rash development. The most common clinical features were dermatomal rash (92%), pain (63%), and conjunctival injection (62%). Common ophthalmic signs at time of presentation included conjunctivitis (40%), uveitis (26%), and keratitis (20%). 51% of patients were started on systemic anti-viral at the time of presentation. Famciclovir was the most commonly used anti-viral agent (54%). However 93% of patients were prescribed the incorrect dose of famciclovir.

**Conclusion:**

This study provides evidence that primary care and emergency department guidelines need to be clear on the importance of early management of HZO, aiming to have all patients on treatment in <72 hours. Further education needs to be provided to health care professionals in clinical assessment, including being aware of ophthalmic complications and the timely correct management of patients with HZO. A follow-up study, to be conducted in England, is recommended.