

History of glaucoma

Contributed by Administrator
Wednesday, 14 November 2007
Last Updated Thursday, 15 November 2007

The discovery of the disease called glaucoma dates back to the 17th century. It was initially described blindness that occurred in older people, associated with a "glazing over" of the pupil. The word glaucoma derives from Greek language, meaning "blue green", likely describing the hazy cornea and cataract that develops in this condition. Cataracts and glaucoma were not clearly distinguished as separate entities until 1705. Arabian writings in the 10th century first identified glaucoma as being associated with raised eye pressure. In the UK, Dr Richard Bannister (1622), an English oculist and author of the first English Ophthalmology textbook, makes a clear reference to a condition with four key features: "eye tension", "long duration of the disease", "absence of perception of light" and "presence of a fixed pupil". Various evolutions in the understanding of the disease led to further advances over the last 200 years, largely in European centres. Dr Drance (Vancouver, Canada) in 1973 provided for the first time the definition of glaucoma as a disease of the optic nerve (an optic neuropathy) caused by various factors, called "risk factors".