

Disease leads to vision loss more often in men

October 15 2008

A new study shows that men are more likely to lose vision as a result of a particular cause of intracranial hypertension, or increased pressure in the brain, than women with the condition. The research is published in the October 15, 2008, online issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

Idiopathic intracranial hypertension (IIH) is a neurological disorder involving too much cerebrospinal fluid pressure, resulting in severe headaches, swelling of the optic nerves, vision loss, double vision, and a whooshing noise in the ears. The disease affects about one in 5,000 people, and is more common in women.

Researchers reviewed the medical records of 721 people with this kind of intracranial hypertension. Only nine percent of the group was male. Participants underwent eyesight exams and brain scans.

The study found that men with intracranial hypertension were two times more likely to experience severe vision problems in one or both eyes. Severe vision loss was defined as meeting the criteria for legal blindness.

"While IIH occurs less often in men, their increased frequency of severe vision loss compared to women is a major concern," said lead study author Beau Bruce, MD, of Emory University in Atlanta and member of the American Academy of Neurology. "Our findings suggest that men with this condition should have more careful monitoring of their eyesight and likely should be treated more aggressively when they do have evidence of vision loss."

The study also found men were more likely to have diagnosed sleep apnea. Bruce says that more prospective studies are needed to evaluate the role of sleep apnea in the treatment of people with intracranial hypertension, but that doctors should consider referring all appropriate people, both men and women with IIH, for sleep studies.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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