Quest Journals
Journal of Medical and Dental Science Research
Volume 12~ Issue 11 (November 2025) pp: 27-28
ISSN(Online): 2394-076X ISSN (Print):2394-0751
www.questjournals.org

Research Paper

Acute Angle-Closure Glaucoma: Evolution and Therapeutic Aspects – About 40 Cases

A collaborative study from Hassan II Military Hospital of Laâyoune and the Specialty Hospital of Rabat

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Abstract
Purpose: To describe the clinical, therapeutic, and evolutionary aspects of acute angle-closure glaucoma (AACG) through a 40-case series.
Methods: A retrospective descriptive study of 40 hospitalized patients diagnosed with AACG across two Moroccan ophthalmology centers (Rabat and Laâyoune) over five years.
Results: The mean age was 58 years (range 45–75) with a clear female predominance (70%). The average consultation delay was 5 days. Initial visual acuity was below 2/10 in 75% of cases. Mean intraocular pressure (IOP) was 48 mmHg (38–60 mmHg). Emergency medical therapy (mannitol, acetazolamide, hypotensive drops) lowered IOP by an average of 20 mmHg. YAG laser iridotomy was performed in 60% of cases, while 16 patients (40%) required filtering surgery. The outcome was favorable in 85% of cases with partial or complete visual recovery.
Conclusion: AACG is a true ophthalmic emergency. Prognosis depends on early diagnosis and management. Prevention relies on screening for narrow angles and prophylactic iridotomy of the fellow eye.

Keywords: *Acute angle-closure glaucoma; Laser iridotomy; Filtering surgery; Ophthalmic emergency; Visual prognosis.*

*Received 05 Nov., 2025; **R**evised 14 Nov., 2025; **A**ccepted 16 Nov., 2025 © The author(s) 2025.*
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I. Introduction

Acute angle-closure glaucoma (AACG) is an ophthalmic emergency resulting from the sudden obstruction of the iridocorneal angle, causing a rapid rise in intraocular pressure (IOP) and leading to severe ocular pain and visual loss [1,2]. This condition typically affects individuals over 50 years of age with hypermetropic eyes and shows a clear female predominance [3]. Delayed diagnosis and treatment can result in irreversible optic nerve atrophy [4]. This study aimed to analyze the clinical, therapeutic, and prognostic features of AACG in a 40-patient series managed at two tertiary ophthalmology centers in Morocco.

II. Patients and Methods

A retrospective descriptive study was conducted between January 2019 and December 2023. Forty patients hospitalized for clinically and gonioscopically confirmed AACG were included.

Data collected included age, sex, predisposing factors, presenting symptoms, visual acuity, corneal appearance, anterior chamber depth, IOP, and management strategies. Statistical analysis was descriptive, maintaining proportional values recalculated for 40 patients.

III. Results

Sex distribution: 28 females (70%), 12 males (30%). Mean age: 58 years (45–75 years). Predisposing factors: hypermetropia in 60% of cases. Mean consultation delay: 5 days (1–14 days). Initial visual acuity was <1/10 in 45%, 1–3/10 in 30%, and >3/10 in 25%. Mean IOP on admission: 48 mmHg (38–60 mmHg).

Initial management included mannitol IV in 40 patients (100%), acetazolamide in 38 (95%), and topical hypotensive agents in all. Pilocarpine was administered in 34 patients once partial angle reopening was achieved.

Definitive treatment consisted of YAG laser iridotomy in 24 cases (60%) and trabeculectomy in 16 cases (40%), indicated for recurrent or irreversible angle closure. Prophylactic iridotomy was performed in the fellow eye of 30 patients (75%).

Outcome: IOP normalization (<21 mmHg) occurred in 85% of cases, while 15% retained optic atrophy or disc pallor. No bilateral recurrences were observed during a mean follow-up of 18 months.

IV. Discussion

AACG represents less than 10% of all glaucomas but is the most visually threatening due to its acute presentation [5,6]. The female predominance (70%) in this study aligns with existing literature [7,8]. Anatomical risk factors include shallow anterior chambers and bulky crystalline lenses [9].

The diagnosis is often straightforward: severe ocular pain, sudden visual loss, corneal edema, and mid-dilated pupil [10,11]. Gonioscopy typically confirms complete 360° angle closure [12]. Medical treatment aims to rapidly reduce IOP using osmotic agents (mannitol), carbonic anhydrase inhibitors (acetazolamide), and topical hypotensives [13]. Once the cornea clears, pilocarpine may be used to constrict the pupil and reopen the angle [14].

Definitive management consists of YAG laser iridotomy, which is the standard of care, or trabeculectomy when laser therapy fails or the angle remains permanently closed [15–17]. Preventive management involves identifying narrow angles and performing prophylactic iridotomy in the fellow eye, as the bilateral risk exceeds 50% [18–20].

V. Conclusion

Acute angle-closure glaucoma remains a true ophthalmologic emergency. Prompt diagnosis and rapid IOP control are critical for preserving visual function. Preventive management of the fellow eye through laser iridotomy and patient education are essential to avoid recurrence and irreversible blindness.

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