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Retinopathy of prematurity: Past, present and future

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Abstract

Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) is a vasoproliferative disorder of the retina occurring principally in new born preterm infants. It is an avoidable cause of childhood blindness. With the increase in the survival of preterm babies, ROP has become the leading cause of preventable childhood blindness throughout the world. A simple screening test done within a few weeks after birth by an ophthalmologist can avoid this preventable blindness. Although screening guidelines and protocols are strictly followed in the developed nations, it lacks in developing economies like India and China, which have the highest number of preterm deliveries in the world. The burden of this blindness in these countries is set to increase tremendously in the future, if corrective steps are not taken immediately. ROP first emerged in 1940s and 1950s, when it was called retrolental fibroplasia (RLF). Several epidemics of this disease were and are still occurring in different regions of the world and since then a lot of research has been done on this disease. However, till date very few comprehensive review articles covering all the aspects of ROP are published. This review highlights the past, present and future strategies in managing this disease. It would help the pediatricians to update their current knowledge on ROP.

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