Lipemia Retinalis

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A 24 year old lady came to our hospital for diabetes control. She was presently asymptomatic but had a history of acute pancreatitis six months back. This episode of pancreatitis occurred ten days after she had a stillbirth. She was recently detected diabetic. Her lipid profile in present admission showed Serum triglyceride levels of 4440mg%, Serum cholesterol of 453mg% with Serum VLDL 888mg%. She had no cutaneous or tendinous xanthomas and no xanthelasmas on her body.

Her fundus examination revealed pale pink to milky white retinal vessels with altered pale reflexes from choroidal vasculature. This fundus picture is suggestive of lipemia retinalis (Figs. 1, 2). Her vision was normal. Rest of her investigations were normal.

Lipemia retinalis is a rare and asymptomatic condition which occurs when high levels of triglycerides and chylomicrons are present in blood. Creamy white appearance of retinal vessels occurs when triglyceride value reaches more than 2000. It is believed that the fundus changes are due to high value of circulating chylomicrons in blood and the effect is due to dispersion of light caused by these chylomicrons.

Lipemia retinalis most commonly occurs in familial hyperchylomicronemia (Type 1 hyperlipoproteinemia), which is an autosomal recessive disorder characterized by lipoprotein lipase or Apo –CII deficiency.

References


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