Recurrent refractive error after myopic laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis – What could be the reason?

Radhika Natarajan, Raj S Paul

Recurrence of myopia after myopic LASIK reduces the outcome of the procedure. Important causes include post-LASIK ectasia, regression of myopia, accommodative strain, and lens or axial length changes. Herein, we present a case of myopia recurring after LASIK and try to arrive at the possible diagnosis among these, as the treatment differs for each. The detailed evaluation showed that our patient had regression of myopia after LASIK. Of the multiple causes for recurrence of refractive error after myopic laser vision correction, it is important to identify the relevant reason as the treatment and prognosis for each of these is different.

Key words: Post LASIK, recurrent myopia, regression

Recurrence of myopia after myopic laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis (LASIK) is often a source of discontentment for the patient and dissatisfaction for the surgeon. Important causes include post-LASIK ectasia[1] and regression of myopia[2,3] besides others related to accommodative strain[4] as well as lens and axial length[2] changes. Herein, we present a case of myopia recurring after LASIK and try to arrive at the possible diagnosis among these, as the treatment is different for each.

Case Report

A 29-year-old woman presented with the blurring of vision over the last few years. She had undergone myopic femtosecond LASIK in both eyes 5 years back elsewhere and had not followed up after that. According to records, her preoperative refractive error was -3.5 DS in both eyes. No details were available about her pre-LASIK work up. Her post-LASIK result was documented as a Snellen vision of 20/20 with the near vision of N6 with a distance correction of -0.25 DS. There was no other contributing history.

On examination, her uncorrected Snellen vision was 20/40, near vision N6 and 20/200, near vision N6 in the right and left eye, respectively. Her best-corrected Snellen vision was 20/20, near vision N6 in both eyes. Cycloplegic refraction was -1.25 DS in the right eye and -3.75 DS in the left eye. Keratometry was 41.00 @165; 42.25 @ 75 in the right eye and 41.25@160; 43.50 @ 70 in the left eye. Slit-lamp examination revealed good LASIK flaps with edges faintly seen. The interfaces showed 1+ haze in both the eyes. There was no clinical evidence of post-LASIK ectasia in either eye. Her crystalline lenses were clear. Rest of the ocular examination was normal. Corneal tomography showed no evidence of post-LASIK ectasia. [Figs. 1 and 2]. Epithelial mapping using anterior segment optical coherence tomography (ASOCT, Cirrus HD-OCT 5000 Carl Zeiss Meditec) did not reveal any compensatory central hyperplasia which could account for the recurrent myopic error. Axial length measurements did not show abnormal elongation of the globes. Orthoptic and binocular vision evaluation did not reveal any accommodative strain. Pentacam Scheimpflug densitometry testing showed moderately high values (25.4 to 28.2 Grey Scale Units) in the flap region, more in the left eye than in the right eye. This was also corroborated as a haze on ASOCT imaging [Fig. 3a and b].

The patient was diagnosed to have regression of refractive error following myopic LASIK. The negative tests helped rule out many of the other reasons for recurrent myopia. She was counseled for options of refractive correction including glasses, contact lenses, surface ablation with mitomycin C, and LASIK enhancement.

Discussion

Patients who undergo laser vision correction are often unhappy with less than perfect quality or quantity of uncorrected vision. Surgeons sometimes under correct myopic LASIK due to pachymetric limitation or to confer monovision for presbyopia. Besides, less often done to keep postoperative keratometric flattening in check to avoid the suboptimal visual result. These are usually explained during preoperative counseling.

Myopic laser treatments can induce asthenopic symptoms or worsen existing ones. The accommodative spasm can show up as recurrent myopia. Routine pre and postoperative orthoptic evaluation can unmask the problem. These patients benefit from binocular vision therapy.[4]

Myopes are prone to develop presenile cataracts. Nuclear sclerosis manifests as index myopia much before visible lens changes or drops in vision happen.[5] Sophisticated lens imaging, if accessible, can confirm this. When cataract advances,

Department of Refractive Surgery, Medical Research Foundation, Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Correspondence to: Dr. Radhika Natarajan, Sankara Nethralaya, Medical Research Foundation, 18 College Road, Nungambakkam, Chennai - 600 006, Tamil Nadu, India. E-mail: 100radsam@gmail.com

Access this article online

Quick Response Code: Website: www.ijo.in

DOI: 10.4103/ijo.IJO_1937_20

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

For reprints contact: WKHLRPMedknow_reprints@wolterskluwer.com

Cite this article as: Natarajan R, Paul RS. Recurrent refractive error after myopic laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis – What could be the reason? Indian J Ophthalmol 2020;68:3048-50.
Regression of myopia after laser vision correction can sometimes happen due to a healing response to the ablation. The “in-situ” location of the “keratomileusis” invites a far less healing response in LASIK as opposed to surface ablative treatments which is the unique selling point of the procedure. However, when it does happen, the regenerative tissue can lead to blurred vision and can bring back some myopia. “Haze” is due to the resultant scar while “regression” is the recurrence of refractive error. Though an exaggerated healing response is a cause for both, the former affects the quality while the latter affects the quantity of uncorrected vision and the two terms cannot be interchanged. Regression has been linked with older laser types, larger ablations, and interfaces inflammation. It can show up 1 to 3 months after treatment and can slowly progress for some years. The interface may show scarring which when subtle can be picked up on anterior segment OCT and Pentacam densitometry as in our patient. Treatment can be conservative with glasses or contact lenses. After watching for stability, surface ablation with mitomycin C or LASIK enhancement can be contemplated after thorough testing and due counseling.

Conclusion

Our patient had regression of myopia after LASIK. There are multiple causes for recurrence of refractive error after myopic laser vision correction. It is important to identify the relevant reason as the treatment and prognosis for each of these is different.

Declaration of patient consent

The authors certify that they have obtained all appropriate patient consent forms. In the form the patient(s) has/have given his/her/their consent for his/her/their images and other clinical information to be reported in the journal. The patients understand that their names and initials will not be published and due efforts will be made to conceal their identity, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
Financial support and sponsorship
Nil.

Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

References
1. Bohac M, Koncarevic M, Pasalic A, Biscevic A, Merlak M, Gabric N, et al. Incidence and clinical characteristics of post LASIK ectasia: A review of over 30,000 LASIK cases. Semin Ophthalmol 2018;33:869-77.
2. Zhou J, Gu W, Li S, Wu L, Gao Y, Guo X. Predictors affecting myopic regression in −6.0D to −10.0D myopia after laser-assisted subepithelial keratomileusis and laser in situ keratomileusis flap creation with femtosecond laser-assisted or mechanical microkeratome-assisted. Int Ophthalmol 2020;40:213-25.
3. Lim SA, Park Y, Cheong YJ, Na KS, Joo C-K. Factors affecting long-term myopic regression after laser in situ keratomileusis and laser-assisted subepithelial keratectomy for moderate myopia. Korean J Ophthalmol 2016;30:92-100.
4. Prakash G, Sharma N, Sharma P, Choudhary V, Titiyal JS. Accommodative spasm after Laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis (LASIK). Am J Ophthalmol 2006;141:1163-4.
5. Pokroy R, Mimouni M, Sela T, Munzer G, Kaiserman I. Myopic laser in situ keratomileusis retreatment: Incidence and associations. J Cataract Refract Surg 2016;42:1408-14.
6. Saka N, Moriyama M, Shimada N, Nagaoka N, Fukuda K, Hayashi K, et al. Changes of axial length measured by IOL master during 2 years in eyes with pathologic myopia. Graefes Arch Clin Exp Ophthalmol 2013;251:495-9.
7. Sharif W, Ali ZR, Sharif K. Long term efficacy and stability of corneal collagen cross linking for post-LASIK ectasia: An average of 80 mo follow-up. Int J Ophthalmol 2019;12:333-7.
8. Spadea L, Giovannetti F. Main complications of photorefractive keratectomy and their management. Clin Ophthalmol 2019;13:2305-15.
9. Moshirfar M, Desautels JD, Walker BD, Murri MS, Birdsong OC, Hoopes PCS. Mechanisms of optical regression following corneal laser refractive surgery: Epithelial and stromal responses. Med Hypothesis Discov Innov Ophthalmol 2018;7:1-9.
10. Sridhar MS, Rao SK, Vajpayee RB, Asuri MK, Hannush S, Sinha R. Complications of laser-in-situ-keratomileusis. Indian J Ophthalmol 2002;50:265-82.