Evaluation of Ocular Outcomes in two 14-day Bed Rest Studies

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BACKGROUND

- Ophthalmological changes have been recently reported in some astronauts involved in long-duration space missions:
- Stereophotographs of the retina and the optic disc (-6° BR, pre- and post-BR)
- Cycloplegic refraction and Best Corrected Visual Acuity (BCVA, at all time points)
- Intraocular pressure (IOP): Goldmann (pre- and post-BR); iCare (-6° BR, at all time points; IOP measured with Tonopen in 5 subjects)
- SPECTRAL-DOMAIN OCT (pre- and post-BR):
  - Circus HD-OCT (Carl Zeiss Meditec, Dublin, CA; vers. 5.0):
    - Average Retinal Nerve Fiber Layer (RNFL) thickness
    - Macular Cube average thickness
  - Spectralis OCT (Heidelberg Engineering, GmbH, Heidelberg, Germany; vers. 5.1.3.0):
    - Average RNFL thickness and total retinal thickness (macular, peripapillary)

RESULTS

- Head-down tilt Bed Rest (BR): ground-based analog to simulate the effects of microgravity on the human body

PURPOSE

- To evaluate ophthalmological changes in two 14-day BR studies

METHODS

- Two integrated, multidisciplinary 14-day BR studies at NASA Flight Analogs Research Unit (FARU): 0° (supine) and -6° head-down tilt
- NASA standard screening procedures for BR studies

NASA bed rest studies STANDARDIZED CONDITIONS

- Subject to rest in bed at all times
- Monitoring by a subject monitor and an in room camera 24 hours a day
- Daily measurement of vital signs, body weight, fluid intake and fluid output
- No napping permitted between 6:00 am and 10:00 pm
- Standardized diet

NASA Flight Analogs Research Unit (FARU)

- 14 days BR Angle 0° -6°
- 14 days BR Duration
- Exercise During BR YES NO

OCULAR EXAMS:

- Pre-BR YES 2 Baselines (Office; BR -10,-3)
- During BR YES Weekly (FARU; BR 4,11)
- Post-BR YES 1 (Office; BR +2)

RESULTS

- Three healthy subjects who completed the 0° BR study also completed the -6° BR study (at least 3-month interval between the two studies)
- BCVA was 20/20 or better pre- and post-BR in all participants. Baseline demographic and ophthalmic characteristics were not significantly different between the two studies (0.09 ≤ P ≤ 1.00)
- Subjects remained asymptomatic throughout the duration of BR
- In both studies, no significant changes compared to baseline were detected for the ocular parameters measured (see results Table and IOP box plots)
- In -6° BR study, IOP increased on average 1.8 mmHg (+13.3%) at BR 3 and 1.7 mmHg (+12.6%) at BR 10 from baseline. At BR +2, IOP decreased on average 1.1 mmHg (-7.2%) from BR 10. A case-by-case analysis revealed different patterns of IOP changes (see, for example, panels L-P)

CONCLUSIONS

- 6° head-down tilt BR produced, in most cases, an initial increase in IOP, with subsequent stabilization and tendency to return to baseline values after BR
- More research is needed to evaluate ocular changes and to better characterize patterns of IOP changes related to long-duration BR
- Further studies will determine the validity of head-down tilt BR as a ground-based analog to study microgravity-induced ocular changes

SUPPORT

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