Understanding Uveal Melanoma: Treatment Options and Path to Recovery

Introduction to Uveal Melanoma

Uveal melanoma is a type of cancer that arises from, the middle layer of the eye. It is crucial to understand the treatment options available to manage this condition effectively. This brochure provides an overview of the two primary treatments: plaque radiotherapy and enucleation, along with potential outcomes and additional therapies to support your recovery.

Treatment Options

1. Plaque Radiotherapy

- **What is it?**
  Plaque radiotherapy involves placing a small, radioactive disc, called a plaque, on the eye's exterior, directly over the tumor. This method delivers targeted radiation to the tumor while sparing surrounding healthy tissues.
- **Procedure**
  The plaque is surgically attached to the eye and remains in place for a few days to a week, depending on the tumor size and location. You will be hospitalized during this period to monitor the treatment closely.
- **Benefits**
  - Preserves the eye and potentially some vision.
  - Minimally invasive compared to enucleation.
- **Considerations**
  - Possible side effects include radiation retinopathy and cataracts.
  - Regular follow-up is essential to monitor for recurrence.

2. Enucleation

- **What is it?**
  Enucleation is the surgical removal of the eye and is recommended when the tumor is large or causing significant pain.
- **Procedure**
  The surgery involves removing the eye and replacing it with an implant. An ocular prosthesis can be fitted later for cosmetic purposes.
- **Benefits**
  - Offers a definitive solution for large tumors.
  - Eliminates the source of the cancer.
- **Considerations**
  - Results in the loss of vision in the affected eye.
  - Psychological support may be beneficial to adjust to the change.

Potential Visual Outcomes

- **Plaque Radiotherapy**: Vision preservation varies based on tumor size and location. Some patients may retain useful vision, while others could experience a gradual decline due to radiation effects.
- **Enucleation**: Results in complete loss of vision in the affected eye. However, the other eye typically remains unaffected, allowing for adaptation over time.

Additional Therapies for Plaque Radiotherapy

1. **Panretinal Photocoagulation (PRP)**
   - **Purpose**: To manage radiation retinopathy by reducing retinal swelling and preventing vision loss.
   - **Frequency**: Typically performed as needed during follow-up visits.
2. **Anti-VEGF Injections**
   - **Purpose**: These injections help control abnormal blood vessel growth and leakage in the retina.
   - **Frequency**: Administered every 4 months over two years, based on individual assessment.

Ultimate Goal: Saving Your Life

Genetic testing – This is suggested that you consider having genetic testing with DNA or RNA to assess the risk for the melanoma spreading to the rest of the body. This is done at the time of treatment and results are available within two months.

The primary goal of treating uveal melanoma is to save your life. While both treatments have implications for vision, they are crucial in controlling the spread of cancer.

Follow-Up Care

Regular follow-up appointments on a 4 month basis, and later on a 6 month basis are essential to monitor for treatment effects and detect any signs of recurrence. Your ocular oncologist will guide you through this process, ensuring you receive comprehensive care every step of the way.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact our office:

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Conclusion

Facing a diagnosis of uveal melanoma can be daunting, but understanding your treatment options and their implications can empower you to make informed decisions. Your healthcare team is here to support you in every aspect of your journey to recovery.