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# Research Article

# Clinical Characteristics and Prognosis of Adult Orbital Cellulitis in a Tertiary General Hospital

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Purpose. Adult orbital cellulitis (OC) occurs relatively rarely, and comprehensive studies that retrospectively evaluate OC are lacking. Here, we aimed to examine the clinical characteristics and prognosis of OC in a tertiary general hospital. Methods. Between October 2010 and May 2019, patients presenting with clinical symptoms of OC in a tertiary general hospital were analyzed in this retrospective study. Twenty-six cases were identified for a detailed review. In these cases, 16 males and 10 females were diagnosed with orbital cellulitis by clinical characteristics and multimodal examinations. We divided patients into three groups: (1) patients secondary to rhinosinusitis, (2) patients secondary to endogenous infection(s) without endophthalmitis, and (3) patients secondary to endophthalmitis. For each group, age, gender, eye type, combined systemic diseases, clinical presentation, leukocyte count, blood culture, diagnostic imaging, therapeutic methods, length of stay, time of postoperation, and patient prognosis were analyzed in detail. Results. There were no significant differences regarding age, gender, preoperative leukocyte count, exophthalmia, blood culture, treatment, or visual changes within the three groups (P < 0.05). There were significant differences, however, in postoperative leukocyte count and ophthalmoplegia between the three groups (P < 0.05). The preoperative and postoperative logarithms of the minimum resolution angle scored by the best-corrected visual acuity (LogMAR BCVA) of group 3 were statistically significant compared to group 1 and group 2 (P < 0.05). Conclusion. We confirmed that the prognosis of OC patients combined with systemic diseases was poor. Patients with OC secondary to endophthalmitis infrequently experience ophthalmoplegia; however, these patients still have poor visual outcomes. Patients cultured positive for Klebsiella pneumoniae infection may not be associated with liver abscess. The level of leukocytes may indicate the condition of the disease.

#### 1. Introduction

Orbital cellulitis (OC) is an urgent and deadly inflammation of the orbital soft tissue. OC is more common in children and relatively rare in adults [1]. Patients often present with blepharedema, ptosis, exophthalmia, ophthalmoplegia, ocular pain, and visual impairment [2]. OC can spread to the adjacent tissue or the cavernous sinus, leading to cavernous sinus thrombophlebitis, and endanger the patient's life [3]. Computed tomography (CT) scans or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) are the standard tools for diagnosing OC,

defining the extent of the infection [4] and identifying the size and location of the orbital abscess [2].

Several reports suggested that sinus inflammation, endophthalmitis, or endogenous infection metastasis could cause OC [5–7]. To the best of our knowledge, however, the available retrospective and comprehensive studies regarding the clinical characteristics and prognosis of adult OC in the literature are lacking. This article aims to describe the detailed clinical features and prognosis of adult OC in a tertiary general hospital over a 10-year period.

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## 2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Design. This study was designed as a retrospective review of the medical records of 26 adult patients diagnosed with OC. The patients were admitted to a tertiary general hospital between October 2010 and May 2019. Children patients with OC were excluded from the review. Age, gender, eye type, combined systemic diseases, clinical presentation, leukocyte count, blood culture, CT or MRI, therapeutic methods, length of stay, time of postoperation, and prognosis are all described in detail.

This study was designed and conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and was submitted to the appropriate review board. All participating patients provided informed consent for this study.

2.2. Statistical Analysis. We collected data from the patients' clinical records, and they were processed with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 19.0, IBM). For categorical variables, Pearson's  $\chi^2$  or Fisher's exact test was used; for continuous variables, the Kruskal–Wallis test was used. Two-tailed tests of significance were performed, and P values <0.05 were regarded as statistically significant.

#### 3. Results

- 3.1. Demographics. The adult patients, 16 males and 10 females that were diagnosed with OC, had a median age of 48 years (range 32.75-66.50). All patients presented with OC in only one eye, with 14 cases that occurred in the right eye and 12 cases that occurred in the left eye. The patients were divided into three groups according to etiology: (1) patients secondary to rhinosinusitis, (2) patients secondary to endogenous infection(s) without endophthalmitis, and (3) patients secondary to endophthalmitis. In the six cases comprising group 1, the instances of OC were split evenly between the right and left eyes. Group 2 (n = 3) included two right eye cases and one left eye case. Finally, in group 3 (n = 17), nine and eight cases presented in the right and left eyes, respectively (Tables 1-3). There were no significant differences in age or gender among the three groups (P < 0.05).
- 3.2. Clinical Presentation. Group 1 and group 2 patients presented with blepharedema and moderately reduced visual acuity. Group 1 had five cases with exophthalmia and five cases with ophthalmoplegia, while group 2 had two cases with exophthalmia and two cases with ophthalmoplegia, with one patient presenting with both (Tables 1 and 2). The patients in group 3 presented with blepharedema and severe visual impairment: 11 cases with exophthalmia and 5 cases with ophthalmoplegia. The best-corrected visual acuity (BCVA) of 15 cases presented with no light perception (NLP), 1 case had LP, and 1 case had BCVA of 2/20 (Table 3).
- 3.3. Combined Systemic Diseases. OC does not always present alone. Two cases were complicated with diabetes in group 1, and 1 case was secondary to T-cell lymphoma. In

- group 2, two cases were complicated with iron-deficiency anemia or secondary to acute lymphocytic leukemia. Five cases were caused by trauma in group 3. Furthermore, 3 cases were complicated with liver or cervical abscesses, and 10 cases were complicated with other systemic diseases including sepsis, diabetes, hypertension, organ failure, or hematopathy (Tables 1–3).
- 3.4. Leukocyte Counts. Routine blood examinations were performed on all patients, and leukocyte counts were analyzed. The normal value of leukocyte counts was  $4.0-10.0\times1000\,\text{uL}$ . The leukocyte counts of 6 patients, 3 patients, and 16 patients were abnormal before the treatment in groups 1, 2, and 3, respectively. While after treatment, the leukocyte counts of 5 patients and 16 patients returned to normal in groups 1 and 3, respectively. However, the total leukocyte counts of 3 patients in group 2 remained abnormal consistently (Tables 1–3).
- 3.5. Blood Cultures. Blood cultures were obtained from all patients; the bacterial culture and fungal culture were both ordered in the blood culture, and three of them were positive. Two cases tested positive for *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and one case was positive for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. The fungal cultures were all negative (Tables 2 and 3).
- 3.6. CT or MRI. Each patient received CT initially. MRI was performed in ten patients (Tables 1–3). CT scans revealed swollen orbital soft tissue, increased fat density, and opacification of the involved sinuses in the patients with sinusitis. Two cases presented bony destruction, and thickening of the associated muscles was present in eight cases. Optic nerve involvement was demonstrated in one case. In addition, we observed one case combined with cavernous sinus thrombophlebitis.

MRI revealed ill-defined infiltration of orbital fat. Only four cases demonstrated an extremely hyperintense signal representing orbital abscess formation when analyzed by diffusion-weighted imaging (DWI) and the corresponding hypointense signal on the apparent diffusion coefficient (ADC).

- 3.7. Length of Stay. In group 1, the mean hospital stay was  $17.17 \pm 9.87$  days, and the mean time to discharge after operation was  $12.33 \pm 9.45$  days. For group 2, the mean hospital stay was  $19.33 \pm 3.06$  days, and the mean time to discharge after operation was  $2.00 \pm 3.46$  days. Finally, in group 3, the mean hospital stay was  $11.94 \pm 5.73$  days with a mean time to discharge after operation of  $5.71 \pm 3.80$  days (Tables 1-3).
- 3.8. Therapeutic Methods and Prognosis. All patients diagnosed with OC were treated with active treatments once admitted to the hospital, including systemic and topical antibiotics, and further therapeutic plans were made according to the patients' conditions.

TABLE 1: Clinical data of 6 patients secondary to rhinosinusitis.

No.	Age/ No. gender/ laterality	Sinuses involved	Clinical presentation Systemic diseases	Systemic diseases	Leukocyte count (initial vs. final)	Blood	CT or MRI	Treatment	Length of stay (days)	Time of postoperation (days)	Initial BCVA	Final BCVA	Prognosis
	39/F/OD	Ethmoid, sphenoid maxillary	Blepharedema, ophthalmoplegia, exophthalmia	T-cell lymphoma	1.5–2.6	Negative	CT MRI	Endoscopic sinus surgery	32	23	20/40	20/100	20/100 Deteriorated
2	73/M/OS	Ethmoid, maxillary	Blepharedema, ophthalmoplegia, exophthalmia	Diabetes hypertension	13.5–7.86	Negative	CI	Endoscopic sinus surgery	23	ſΩ	HM	NLP	NLP Recovered
33	27/F/OS	Ethmoid, maxillary frontal	Blepharedema, ophthalmoplegia, exophthalmia	N/A	12.7–7.54	Negative	CT MRI	Endoscopic sinus surgery	10	6	20/50	20/50	Recovered
4	34/F/OD	Ethmoid, maxillary	Blepharedema	N/A	11.5–5.6	Negative	CI	Conservative	4	N/A	20/60	20/60	20/60 Recovered
5	63/F/OD	Ethmoid, maxillary frontal	Blepharedema, ophthalmoplegia, exophthalmia	Diabetes	10.81-8.5	Negative	CI	Conservative	15	N/A	20/20	20/20	Recovered
9	46/M/OS	46/M/OS Sphenoid	Blepharedema, ophthalmoplegia, exophthalmia	Cavernous sinus thrombophlebitis	3.2–6.9	Negative	CT MRI	Conservative	19	N/A	20/100	20/60	20/60 Improved

NLP: no light perception; BCVA: best-corrected visual acuity; N/A: not applicable; CT: computed tomography; MRI: magnetic resonance imaging; HM: hand motion.

TABLE 2: Clinical data of 3 patients secondary to endogenous infection(s) without endophthalmitis.

	Prognosis	Recovered	Recovered	20/60 Deteriorated
	Initial Final BCVA BCVA	20/100 20/60	20/20	
	Initial BCVA	20/100	20/20	20/40
uranninis.	Time of postoperation (days)	9	N/A	N/A
ıdanı cınadbıı	Length of stay (days)	22	16	20
meenom(s) wm	Treatmen	Abscess incision	CT Conservative	Conservative
genous n	CT or MRI	CT MRI	CI	CT
condany to chao	Blood culture	Negative	Negative	Pseudomonas aeruginosa
a oi 2 patietitis se	Leukocyte count (initial vs. Blood culture final)	22.85–10.54	11.16-10.57	1.64-0.24
TABLE 2. CHILICAL MAIA OF 9 PARICHES SECONDALLY TO CHICUGETHORS HILCCHOILS) WILLOW CHICUGHTHIS.		Iron-deficiency anemia	Rheumatism	Acute lymphocytic leukemia, sepsis
	Clinical presentation Systemic diseases	Blepharedema, ophthalmoplegia, exophthalmia	Blepharedema	Blepharedema, ophthalmoplegia, exophthalmia
	Age/ gender/ laterality	26/M/OD	50/F/OS	28/M/OD
	No.	1	7	8

BCVA: best-corrected visual acuity; N/A: not applicable; CT: computed tomography; MRI: magnetic resonance imaging.

TABLE 3: Clinical data of 17 patients secondary to endophthalmitis.

Length Treatment of stav
Intravitreal 9 injection (twice)
Intravitreal 28 injection (twice)
Evisceration of 7 eye contents
Evisceration of 12 eye contents
Evisceration of 12 eye contents
Intravitreal 10 injection (once)
Enucleation 12
Intravitreal 16 injection (once)
Auscess incision, vitrectomy, 19 intravitreal injection
Evisceration of 6 eye contents
Vitrectomy intravitreal 9 injection
Abscess incision 5
Enucleation 17
Evisceration of 10 eye contents
, Conservative 9

TABLE 3: Continued.

No.	Age/ gender/ laterality	Etiology	Etiology Clinical presentation Systemic diseases	Systemic diseases	Leukocyte count (initial vs. final)	Blood	CT or MRI	Treatment	Length of stay pos (days)	Time of postoperation (days)	Initial VA	Final	Initial Final Prognosis VA VA
16	45/M/OS	16 45/M/OS Endogenous	Blepharedema	Sepsis hypertension	13.05-8.91	Klebsiella pneumoniae	CT	CT Conservative	15	N/A	NLP	NLP	NLP NLP Recovered
17	17 73/F/OD	Corneal perforation	Blepharedema	N/A	12.6–6.94	12.6–6.94 Negative	CT MRI	Conservative	7	N/A	NLP	NLP	NLP NLP Recovered
NLP:	no light perca	eption; BCVA: be	NLP: no light perception; BCVA: best-corrected visual acuity; N/A: not applicable; COPD: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; CT: computed tomography; MRI: magnetic resonance imaging.	; N/A: not applicable	; COPD: chronic	c obstructive pulr	nonary c	lisease; CT: compu	ted tomogra	aphy; MRI: magneti	c resonan	ice imagi	ng.

Three cases in group 1 were treated with endoscopic sinus surgery, while another three cases were treated conservatively. Only one patient could not visualize hand motion at the time of hospitalization and had NLP at the time of discharge. In this case, we considered that inflammation spread to the optic nerve. One case in group 2 was treated with abscess incision, and the other two cases were treated with conservative treatment.

Six cases in group 3 were treated with intravitreal injection of vancomycin and cefazolin. Five and two cases were treated with the evisceration of eye contents and enucleation, respectively. Abscess incision was done in two cases, and three cases were treated with conservative treatment. Unfortunately, all patients had a BCVA of NLP (Tables 1–3).

Microbial cultures of the drained abscesses from three patients were performed, and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* was identified and cultured in one patient. In two patients, there was no growth reported.

3.9. Group Comparisons. There were no significant differences in preoperative leukocyte count, exophthalmia, blood culture, treatment, and visual changes among the three groups (P < 0.05). There were significant differences in postoperative leukocyte count and ophthalmoplegia between the three groups (P < 0.05). The preoperative and postoperative minimum resolution angles in logarithm best-corrected visual acuity (LogMAR BCVA) of group 3 were statistically significant compared with group 1 and group 2 (P < 0.05) (Tables 4 and 5).

#### 4. Discussion

OC can be divided into anterior orbital septum cellulitis and posterior orbital septum cellulitis [8]. A variety of reasons cause OC. Firstly, inflammation of ethmoid, maxillary, frontal, or sphenoid sinuses can lead to OC [5]. Secondly, reports indicate that endophthalmitis commonly causes OC [6]. Thirdly, some OC patients had secondary endogenous infection metastasis [7]. In immunocompromised patients or in patients with systemic diseases, such as leukemia, T-cell lymphoma, sepsis, and diabetes, OC more easily leads to endogenous and secondary infections [9].

OC resulting from rhinosinusitis occurs most frequently in children and rarely in adults [2]. Contradicting this finding, however, Siedek et al. found that 75% of rhinosinusitis-caused OC patients in their study were adults [5]. The anatomy of the sinus lies close to the orbit. As a result, sinus inflammation may spread directly to the orbit through the bone or indirectly through the valveless venous plexus surrounding the orbit and the sinuses [10]. Spread through the ethmoid sinusitis was the most common because of the thin ethmoid bone [2]. According to Stammberger's classification, OC is the most serious ocular complication, secondary to rhinosinusitis (stage IV) [11]. Reports suggested that stages I and II can be treated conservatively, while stages III and IV were recommended to receive surgery [5]. In our group 1 of all adult patients, five patients belonged to stage IV, 60% (n = 3) of which were treated with endoscopic sinus surgery. Of those who received surgery, 66.7% (n = 2) recovered, while one patient with T-cell lymphoma deteriorated.

OC also can be caused by endophthalmitis or panophthalmitis. While the underlying mechanism remains unclear, it is generally assumed that intraocular inflammation can spread to the periocular tissues, resulting in orbital cellulitis [6, 12]. In traumatic endophthalmitis, the wound may implant the pathogenic bacteria directly in the periocular or orbital tissues. By a similar mechanism, cataract, strabismus, or retinal detachment surgery can also lead to OC [6, 13, 14]. Endogenous endophthalmitis is especially prone to occur in immunocompromised patients or patients with severe systemic diseases. In these cases, the primary origins of the infection cannot be found [9].

Endophthalmitis patients with mild symptoms can be treated conservatively, but severe cases can be treated with intravitreal injection. In these instances, vancomycin and cefazolin have proven effective in controlling the inflammation [15]. If the disease still progresses, enucleation or evisceration surgery should be performed [16]. In our study, six cases in group 3 were treated with intravitreal injection (vancomycin and cefazolin), five cases were treated with evisceration of the eye contents, two cases were treated with enucleation, and three cases were treated conservatively. In total, 17 cases (100%) of OC with secondary endophthalmitis were effectively controlled. We considered that OC secondary to endophthalmitis could be controlled if active treatments are given.

K. pneumoniae is a small, packaged, Gram-negative bacterium [17], and secondary endophthalmitis complicated with a liver abscess is considered a clinical syndrome closely associated with diabetes in Asians [18]. In our study, two patients cultured positive for K. pneumoniae infection by blood culture. They were found with cervical abscess and sepsis, however, which were not associated with liver abscess. On the contrary, the blood cultures of the two liver abscess patients were negative for pathogenic bacteria.

OC in only three patients was caused by endogenous infection without endophthalmitis. In these instances, one case was complicated with acute lymphocytic leukemia, and one situation was complicated with iron-deficiency anemia and ulcerative colitis. In the first patient, the blood culture was positive for *P. aeruginosa*, and the patient had complications with sepsis during the hospitalization period. The condition deteriorated eventually even after timely treatment.

Routine blood tests showed evidence of an increase in leukocyte count in most OC patients [2]. In our study, comparisons among the three groups illustrated that post-operative leukocyte counts of patients in group 2 changed more dramatically than the other two groups. We also noticed that the incidence of ophthalmoplegia in group 3 was less than that of other groups, indicating that OC with secondary endophthalmitis rarely invaded extraocular muscles (29.4%), which have not been reported in the literature. Furthermore, in comparing the preoperative and postoperative LogMAR BCVA among the three groups, we concluded that patients in group 3 had poorer visual

Table 4: Demographics and clinical presentation of 26 patients.

		Age (years) (n)		Gender (n)	н (п)	Ophthalmoplegia (n)	talmoplegia (n)	Exophthalmia (n)	mia (n)		Leukocyte counts (n)	unts (n)		Blood culture (n)	ure (n)	Treatment (n)	t (n)	BC	BCVA (initial vs. final) (n)	0	
Group No.	10.45	97		Mol	Eamola	>	ž	× ×	ž	Initial	lal	1	Final	Doctrina	Nametiva	Bositiva Manetina Consumention Observation Investored Hischentual Discussion	Onamphon	Immound	Thehanand	Dacrassad	
				Man		3	04	3	9	Normal	Normal Abnormal Abnormal	Normal	Abnormal	a contract	racgarrac	COLISCI VALIDIL	Operation	mbrowen	Cucuangea	naepara	
1	9	3	1	2	2	4	5	1	5	1	0	9	2	1	0	9	3	3	1	4	-
2	3	2	1	0	2	1	2	1	2	1	0	3	0	3	1	2	2	1	1	1	1
3	17	7	0	10	12	2	2	12	=	9	-	16	16	-	2	15	3	14	2	0	15
P value	ı		0.136		0.231		0.047	47	0,	0.822	1.000		0.003	3	0.4	0.425	0.138			980.0	
BCVA: b	est-corre	CVA: best-corrected visual acuity.	al acuity.																		

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TABLE 5: The BCVA and length of stay of 26 patients.

Group	Cases	No.	Initial BCVA	Final BCVA	Length of stay (days)	Time of postoperation (days)
		1	20/40	20/100	32	23
		2	HM	NLP	23	5
1	6	3	20/50	20/50	10	9
1	6	4	20/60	20/60	4	N/A
		5	20/20	20/20	15	N/A
		6	20/100	20/60	19	N/A
		7	20/100	20/60	22	6
2	3	8	20/20	20/20	16	N/A
		9	20/40	20/60	20	N/A
		10	NLP	NLP	9	4
3		11	LP	NLP	28	12
		12	NLP	NLP	7	7
		13	NLP	NLP	12	6
		14	NLP	NLP	12	7
		15	NLP	NLP	10	10
		16	NLP	NLP	12	4
		17	20/200	NLP	16	12
	17	18	NLP	NLP	19	4
		19	NLP	NLP	6	4
		20	NLP	NLP	9	7
		21	NLP	NLP	5	5
		22	NLP	NLP	17	10
		23	NLP	NLP	10	5
		24	NLP	NLP	9	N/A
		25	NLP	NLP	15	N/A
		26	NLP	NLP	7	N/A
			1 vs. 2:1.000	1 vs. 2:1.000		
P value			1 vs. 3:0.000	1 vs. 3:0.000	0.083	0.380
			2 vs. 3:0.006	2 vs. 3:0.005		

NLP: no light perception; BCVA: best-corrected visual acuity; N/A: not applicable.

outcomes than any other group because all patients ended up with the BCVA of NLP. Endophthalmitis is a severe disease that can result in serious visual impairment and even blindness. Therefore, we concluded that the poorer vision in group 3 is attributable to endophthalmitis.

In our study, bacterial and fungal blood cultures were performed. Three patients were positive for bacteria (11.5%), while the other patients were negative. Fungal infections are common in adult OC patients with diabetes [10]. However, in the present study, the results of fungal cultures were all negative, even in the patients combined with systemic diseases, such as diabetes, leukemia, T-cell lymphoma, and sepsis. Similarly, in a study by Hsu J et al., blood cultures were the most frequently collected but were the least likely to be positive (17.6%) [19]. We speculated that the results were negative due to the antibiotic treatment prior to blood collection. In addition, leukocyte counts are still a suitable parameter for diagnosing infection. However, the relationship between the prognosis of infection and leukocyte has been rarely described [20]. In our study, the routine blood tests showed evidence of elevated leukocyte count in all the patients except for 2, one complicated with acute lymphocytic leukemia and the other with T-cell lymphoma. The leukocyte counts returned to normal when the patients recovered. However, the counts of the two patients with acute lymphocytic leukemia and T-cell lymphoma remained abnormal. This finding is consistent with the deterioration of their disease, so we concluded that the leukocyte counts might indicate the recovery or deterioration of the disease.

There were several limitations to this study. Firstly, this retrospective study had a small sample size. Secondly, the patient had been treated with antibiotics at the time of blood culture collection. As a result, the positive rate is relatively low. Thirdly, the patients included were all adults, so this study is unable to describe the differences in clinical characteristics and prognosis between adults and children with OC.

# 5. Conclusions

We confirmed that OC could be well controlled if timely treatments are given. The prognosis of orbital cellulitis patients combined with severe systemic diseases, however, was generally poor. While patients with orbital cellulitis secondary to endophthalmitis infrequently experience ophthalmoplegia, these patients still have poor visual outcomes. Patients cultured positive for *Klebsiella pneumoniae* infection may not be associated with liver abscess. Furthermore, the leukocyte levels may indicate the condition of the disease. More data by multiple centers are required to understand the clinical characteristics and prognosis of OC better.

## **Abbreviations**

BCVA: Best-corrected visual acuity CT: Computed tomography

LogMAR: Minimum resolution angle in logarithm

MRI: Magnetic resonance imaging

NLP: No light perception OC: Orbital cellulitis.

# **Data Availability**

The data used to support the findings of this study are included within the article.

# **Ethical Approval**

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Jiangsu Province Hospital.

#### **Disclosure**

Bangtao Yao and Yuhua Ding are co-first authors.

#### **Conflicts of Interest**

This study has no commercial or propriety interest. The authors report no conflicts of interest.

### **Authors' Contributions**

Bangtao Yao and Yuhua Ding contributed equally to the work; BTY collected the data of the patient and wrote the manuscript; YHD consulted literatures and edited the manuscript; XGZ analyzed the data; BW dealt with the tables; and GL and FW established the diagnosis and reviewed the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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