

## 'LUMPS' ON THE EYES

A 46-year old man, who is a farm worker, comes to the clinic because he has noticed 'lumps' on the surface of both eyes. They look similar in each eye, and are on the nasal side of the cornea in each eye. The lumps have been there for a long time. He is worried because he thinks they are getting bigger and may affect his vision. His eyes are irritable sometimes, and feel 'dry'. He denies any trauma.

Both eyes have a similar appearance, with a triangular shaped fleshy vascular lesion on the medial side of the cornea in each eye.

<b>Age</b>	46 years
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>BP</b>	140/90
<b>HR</b>	80
<b>RR</b>	20
<b>T</b>	36.9
<b>HIV status</b>	Negative
<b>Visual Acuity</b>	6/6 both eyes



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## QUESTIONS

- 1: What are these lesions?
- 2: How are they caused?
- 3: How would you manage the patient?
- 4: What other possible problems should you consider?

## DISCUSSION

### 1. *What are these lesions?*

This lesion is called a Pterygium. (*Plural = Pterygia*). They are common in hot parts of the world. They are areas where the conjunctiva has grown over the edge of the cornea.

### 2. *How are they caused?*

They are caused by a spot of drying on the surface of the cornea, which causes the conjunctiva to grow over the dry spot. Then another dry spot forms, and the conjunctiva grows a bit further. So, the lesions tend to grow towards the centre of the cornea, though they often do not grow very far and do not cover the pupil.

### 3. *How would you manage the patient?*

Whilst they can be removed surgically, they often tend to grow back, and if possible, it is better to treat medically with lubricant eye drops, such as Hypromellose or other artificial tears. It is better not to embark on surgery unless the pterygium is actually growing over the pupil. Patients are often worried about the appearance, and are reassured by an explanation. Frequent use of lubricant drops can improve symptoms of discomfort and may help to slow any progression.

### 4. *What other possible problems should you consider?*

Trauma to the cornea, or a wound on the cornea, can cause a similar appearance, with conjunctiva adhering to the scar, which is called a Pseudo-Pterygium. Always check the patient has not had an injury.