Preface

Glaucoma

I know that I know nothing.
—Socrates

With time, I have learned to be humbled by my ignorance and by the infinite, additional speculative thoughts that arise every time I presume I understand something, and I have the illusion that I have reached an endpoint. Opening a single door in the building of knowledge brings the investigator into a room with a multitude of new, mysterious doors. What appeared to be an answer turns out to be only fertile ground for new questions, and new horizons keep expanding exponentially and confusingly.

The same feeling of vast ignorance strikes me when I attempt to define and understand glaucoma. The word “glaucoma” comes from the Greek word “glaucos,” which means gray or bluish. The semantics of the word itself seems to prefigure the foggy state of our current knowledge surrounding this group of diseases.

As human beings, we like to classify things in boxes. That’s how our minds work best. However, when we try to delve into the finer aspects of the mechanisms and molecular cascades involved in glaucoma, simple categories fail us as we face the confusing, often overlapping but sometimes contradictory nature of a disease that bears a common name but may take very different forms across different species, breeds, and individuals. Things are blurry; multiple shades of gray make the transition between different phenotypes hazy, and we, or at least I, seem to be lost in a state of “quantum confusion.”

When asked to coordinate this issue of *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice*, I was excited and concerned at the same time. My goal in this issue has been to try to illuminate that which is currently known and that which is currently unknown about this group of diseases that we classify under the single term “glaucoma.” My challenge has been to provide both practical, useful information and stimulus for further speculation. As veterinarians, we need clear clinical guidance to help our current patients and clients, but we also need to honestly acknowledge the lack...
of specific, in-depth information regarding different forms of glaucoma, particularly in veterinary patients.

It’s an ongoing journey. We have made some inroads and changed directions a few times over the years. Our working assumptions about glaucoma are sometimes preliminary and often based on anecdotal evidence. Our numbers are small, and our results are based mostly on retrospective studies, which are truly useful but also constrained by obvious limitations. Each species (and, within each species, each breed and each different stage of disease) likely warrants its own classification scheme and set of treatment recommendations, but the paucity of currently available data makes our job difficult.

I hope this issue will provide rational, useful information to general clinicians while stimulating more questioning and increased collaboration among specialists to further the collection of useful data.

Several people and resources have helped me in the preparation of this issue. I am thankful to the publisher for offering me this opportunity, and I can’t value enough the great contributions provided by the authors of this issue.

To all of them goes my sincere gratitude.

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