THE NEVER-ENDING TRANSIT OF VENUS: A CASE OF SOLAR RETINOPATHY

Purpose:
Solar retinopathy is an uncommon clinical entity in the developed world. Despite being widely understood within the ophthalmological community, cases continue to surface following publicised solar astronomical events such as the recent Transit of Venus. A case of solar retinopathy in an 11 year-old school-girl is presented. While this case fits well in an historical context of sun-gazing practices, no cases should occur in any Australian school-children who are surrounded by educated adults. Measures to prevent future occurrences in this age group are discussed.

Method:
An 11 year-old girl presented to the emer-gency department with metamorphopsia and a central scotoma in her right eye following one-eye gazing into the sun for an accumulative period of one hour. A full ocular examination was performed along with spec-tral-domain OCT and Goldmann visual fields.

Results:
The examination and investigation findings were consistent with solar retinopathy. This case mirrors sun-induced blindness and eye damage in communities that practiced regular sun-gazing and in notable individuals in history.

Conclusion:
Solar retinopathy is a rare but important clinical phenomenon with the potential of causing per-manent damage to vision. The educational importance of solar astronomical events cannot be over-stated, however, much more can be done to protect children’s eyes. Increased public awareness by the ophthalmologi-cal community together with increased accessibility of suitable protective viewing methods prior to astronomi-cal events should prevent this condition.