**Sir,
Comments on 'Long-term outcomes of phakic patients with diabetic macular oedema treated with intravitreal fluocinolone acetonide (FAC) implants'**

We read with interest the article titled 'Long-term outcomes of phakic patients with diabetic macular oedema treated with intravitreal fluocinolone acetonide (FAC) implants' by Yang *et al.*¹ They present a *post hoc* analysis of the FAME study² and compare visual outcomes in patients undergoing cataract surgery after low-dose FAC implant with those who were pseudophakic at baseline. They conclude the former group to have possibly better long-term results.

In the cataract surgery after implant (CAI) group, the favorable change in visual acuity may have been partly contributed by removal of lenticular aberrations³ expected in diabetes patients having early lens opacities or even lenticular swelling. Hence, crediting FAC for better visual results in the CAI group may be erroneous. Single intravitreal steroid injections have been reported to cause subcapsular cataract and multiple injections may affect all the lens layers.⁴ Given the continuous low intraocular concentration of steroid with FAC implant, it would be interesting to evaluate the type of cataract seen in the CAI group.

The other adverse effect of FAC noted in the FAME study was ocular hypertension, with nearly 4% of subjects injected with low-dose FAC needing incision glaucoma surgery.² As lens extraction is known to decrease intraocular pressure,⁵ we suggest analyzing change in intraocular pressure in patients in the CAI group after cataract surgery. It is possible that ocular hypertension may have resolved altogether in some patients, especially in the presence of anterior synechiae.

As the diabetic macular edema and its treatment are of utmost importance, we wish the authors would share their opinion on these issues.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Eye (2016) **30**, 1023; doi:10.1038/eye.2016.27;
published online 11 March 2016

**Sir,
Reply to 'Comments on Long-term outcomes of phakic patients with diabetic macular oedema treated with intravitreal fluocinolone acetonide (FAC) implants'**

We thank Takkar and Azad¹ for their astute observations on our recent paper² which focused on the outcomes of phakic patients who developed cataract after receiving fluocinolone implant and underwent cataract surgery in the FAME trial. It is quite correct of them to comment that the visual improvement seen in this group of patients could represent an over-estimation or bias if these patients had significant cataract at baseline before receiving implant. However, this is unlikely to be the case as any cataract which either prevented assessment of the fundus or which had a significant impact on visual acuity was an exclusion criterion.³ In addition, the baseline acuities and central retinal thickness of these patients were very similar to those who were pseudophakic at baseline as shown in Table 1 (baseline characteristics) in our paper. Moreover, it would have been unlikely that small lenticular aberrations would have affected the baseline visual acuity measurements of this group of patients due to the use of high-contrast ETDRS charts and protocol refraction techniques for the measurement of visual acuities in the FAME study. The important message from our study was that patients who were phakic before receiving fluocinolone implant but developed cataract after fluocinolone implant were able to recover visual acuity well after subsequent cataract surgery. We felt it was important to highlight this finding following analysis of the long-term follow-up data on this subgroup of patients following cataract surgery, as the use of fluocinolone implant for diabetic macular oedema in UK is currently restricted by NICE guidance to only those patients who are pseudophakic. Although these guidelines have enabled patients with eyes that are pseudophakic and with persistent diabetic macular oedema following anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) therapy to benefit from fluocinolone implant,⁴ there is still an unmet need for those with diabetic macular oedema which is unresponsive to laser or anti-VEGF therapy in phakic eyes. We also agree that it would be interesting to investigate the effects of cataract surgery on steroid-induced ocular hypertension or glaucoma, but this was unrelated to the tight remit and scope of our study question and objective, and therefore, we did not include this analysis in our design.

Conflict of interest

YY: honoraria, advisory board—Alimera Sciences, Allergan, Alcon, Bayer, Novartis, Thrombogenics;