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1 What was known before:
2 Anti-VEGF agents are in widespread use as adjuncts to vitreoretinal surgery for advanced
3 proliferative retinopathy. Detailed data on surgical outcomes is limited to small uncontrolled
4 studies, although there is now good quality evidence that prior injection of bevacizumab reduces
5 post-operative vitreous cavity haemorrhage. Ranibizumab has been reported to reduce intra-
6 operative haemorrhage.
7

8
9 What this study adds:
10 This pilot randomised clinical trial investigated ranibizumab pre-treatment before diabetic
11 vitrectomy-delamination surgery. The study shows that the likely effect size of ranibizumab on
12 final visual acuity is likely to be small, and with the heterogeneity of outcomes in this condition, a
13 further definite study powered to detect a significant difference is unlikely to be feasible given the
14 subject numbers required. Clinicians will likely therefore continue to use anti-VEGF agents in this
15 condition based on individual experience and preference.
16

17

18 **TITLE PAGE**

19 **Title**

20 Ranibizumab pre-treatment in Diabetic Vitrectomy - a pilot randomised controlled trial (the
21 RaDiVit study)

22 **Running Title**

23
24 Ranibizumab in diabetic vitrectomy (RaDiVit)

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53
54 **Conflict of interest statement**

55
56 Supported by an unrestricted research grant from Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd.,
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60 Wellcome Trust [099173/Z/12/Z].

61
62

63

64

65 **ABSTRACT**

66 **Purpose**

67 Our aim was to evaluate the impact of intravitreal ranibizumab pre-treatment on the outcome
68 of vitrectomy surgery for advanced proliferative diabetic retinopathy. The objective was to
69 determine the feasibility of a subsequent definitive trial and estimate the effect size and
70 variability of the outcome measure.

71 **Methods**

72 We performed a pilot randomised double-masked single-centre clinical trial in 30 participants
73 with tractional retinal detachment associated with proliferative diabetic retinopathy. Seven
74 days prior to vitrectomy surgery, participants were randomly allocated to receive either
75 intravitreal ranibizumab (Lucentis®, Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd.) or subconjunctival
76 saline (control). The primary outcome was best-corrected visual acuity 12 weeks following
77 surgery.

78 **Results**

79 At 12 weeks the mean (SD) visual acuity was 46.7 (25) ETDRS letters in the control group
80 and 52.6 (21) letters in the ranibizumab group. Mean visual acuity improved by 14 (31)
81 letters in the control group and by 24 (27) letters in the ranibizumab group. We found no
82 difference in the progression of tractional retinal detachment prior to surgery, the duration of
83 surgery or its technical difficulty. Vitreous cavity haemorrhage persisted at 12 weeks in 2 of
84 the control group but none of the ranibizumab group.

85 **Conclusions**

86 Ranibizumab pre-treatment may improve the outcome of vitrectomy surgery for advanced
87 proliferative diabetic retinopathy by reducing the extent of postoperative vitreous cavity
88 haemorrhage. However, the effect size appears to be modest; we calculate that a definitive
89 study to establish a minimally important difference of 5.9 letters at a significance level of
90 $P < 0.05$ would require 348 subjects in each arm.

91

92 **INTRODUCTION**

93 Advanced proliferative retinopathy is characterized by fibrovascular proliferation, vitreous
94 haemorrhage and tractional retinal detachment (Figure 1A and B). This condition is
95 conventionally managed by vitreoretinal surgery, the outcome of which can be limited by
96 recurrent postoperative vitreous cavity haemorrhage.^{1,2} The intraocular administration of
97 therapeutic anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) antibodies is variably used as an
98 adjunct to vitrectomy with the aim of improving the outcome by facilitating safe delamination
99 of fibrovascular membranes and reducing the incidence of post-operative vitreous cavity
100 haemorrhage.³⁻⁸ However the value of adjunctive administration of antiVEGF antibodies has
101 yet to be established with confidence.

102 Intravitreal ranibizumab pre-treatment, 7 days prior to vitrectomy surgery for diabetic
103 tractional retinal detachment, can reduce intraoperative haemorrhage.⁹ The aim of the
104 present study was to evaluate its impact on postoperative outcomes. The objective was to
105 measure the effect on visual acuity and ascertain the number of participants that would be
106 needed to determine such an effect with confidence.

107

108 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

109 We performed a randomised double-masked parallel group pilot study at Moorfields Eye
110 Hospital (NCT01306981). The study conformed to the Declaration of Helsinki and was
111 approved prospectively by the Central London Research Ethics Committee 1 of the UK
112 National Research Ethics Service. All participants gave their informed consent to participate
113 in the research prior to enrolment.

114 We included 30 eyes of 30 adult participants having vitrectomy and delamination surgery for
115 advanced proliferative diabetic retinopathy with fibrovascular complexes and/or tractional
116 retinal detachment. Eyes with persistent vitreous haemorrhage could be included because of
117 the use of ultrasonography to evaluate attachment of the retina. We excluded eyes having

118 planned combined cataract and vitrectomy, those with only a single focal point of
119 vitreoretinal attachment apparent on clinical examination or ultrasonography, and those with
120 cataract or uncontrolled glaucoma. We excluded individuals with visual acuity in the
121 contralateral eye of 3/60 or poorer, hypersensitivity to the active substance or excipients,
122 and cerebrovascular, cardiovascular or peripheral vascular disease.

123

124 Seven days (± 1 day) prior to vitrectomy surgery, participants were randomly allocated 1:1 to
125 receive either intravitreal ranibizumab (Lucentis®, 0.5 mg in 0.05 ml solution for injection,
126 Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd., Frimley, United Kingdom), or subconjunctival saline
127 control (sodium chloride, 0.05ml of 0.9% solution for injection) using a 1ml syringe and 30-
128 gauge needle. Randomisation was performed using random permuted blocks of varying
129 sizes. The allocation sequence was held by the trial statistician and concealed from the
130 investigator enrolling and assessing participants. An unmasked investigator administered the
131 study agents. Participants in both groups were prepared identically using topical anaesthetic
132 and povidone iodine; topical levofloxacin was administered immediately prior to the injection
133 and 4 times daily for 4 days. The participants, operating surgeons and assessing
134 investigators were masked to treatment allocation. Participants were assessed at baseline,
135 immediately prior to surgery, and at 6 weeks and 12 weeks following surgery.

136

137 Experienced vitreoretinal surgeons performed 20-gauge pars plana vitrectomy and *en-bloc*
138 delamination of fibrovascular membranes, panretinal endo-photocoagulation, with retinopexy
139 and endotamponade if indicated. We recorded the duration of surgery, the number of back-
140 flush cannula and endodiathermy applications required to control haemorrhage, retinal
141 breaks, intraoperative bleeding score (0-none; 1-mild, stopped by bottle elevation; 2-
142 moderate, forming clots or persistent; 3-severe, covering half of posterior pole) and the
143 anticipated surgical complexity score (Castellarin *et al.*).¹⁰

144

145 To investigate the impact of ranibizumab on the extent of tractional retinal detachment prior

146 to surgery we examined the study eye prior to administration of the study agent and one
147 week later on the day of surgery by slit-lamp biomicroscopy and ultrasonography (Acuson
148 Sequoia 512 scanner, 14 MHz linear probe; Siemens Medical Solutions USA; Mountain
149 View, CA, USA). To investigate the impact on retinal neovascularisation and ischaemia we
150 performed fluorescein angiography (unless precluded by vitreous haemorrhage); masked
151 assessors at Moorfields Reading Centre measured the greatest linear dimension and area of
152 the foveal avascular zone, and the grade of perifoveal capillary non-perfusion.

153

154 The primary outcome measure was Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study (ETDRS)
155 best-corrected visual acuity 12 weeks following surgery. Secondary outcome measures
156 included the extent of tractional retinal detachment and macular perfusion at the time of
157 surgery; the technical ease of vitrectomy surgery including duration, instrument usage and
158 intra-operative haemorrhage; and the presence of post-operative vitreous cavity
159 haemorrhage. This was graded using a previously described scale from 0 – 3 (0 – no
160 haemorrhage, clear view; 1 – minor haemorrhage with fundus details visible; 2 – moderate
161 haemorrhage with only disc and major vessels visible; 3 – severe haemorrhage with fundus
162 details not visible).¹¹

163

164 For this pilot trial we performed no formal sample size calculation but estimated that 30
165 subjects would be sufficient to explore the feasibility of a subsequent definitive trial and to
166 enable calculation of its sample size. The Trial Steering Group approved a statistical
167 analysis plan prior to analysis of data. We compared baseline characteristics of the
168 participants allocated to the 2 treatment arms. Normality was assessed by inspection of
169 histograms. We calculated summary statistics using STATA statistical software (version 12,
170 StataCorp LP, College Station, TX, USA).

171

172

173 **RESULTS**

174 We included 30 eyes of 30 participants and randomly allocated 15 eyes to each arm of the
175 study, and none were lost to follow-up. All eyes had been managed for proliferative
176 retinopathy by panretinal photocoagulation prior to enrolment. The participants in the 2 arms
177 were similar (Table 1) though the overall complexity score derived from ultrasound
178 assessment of tractional detachment was slightly higher in the ranibizumab group (Table 2).

179

180 At 12 weeks following surgery the mean (standard deviation) visual acuity was 46.7 (25)
181 ETDRS letters in the control group and 52.6 (21) letters in the ranibizumab group (Figure 2).
182 The mean visual acuity improved by 14 (31) letters in the control group and by 24 (27) letters
183 in the ranibizumab group.

184

185 One participant in each group developed new tractional retinal detachment following the
186 study injection; in neither instance did this involve the macula (Table 2). The mean height of
187 TRD increased slightly in control eyes following the study injection. No other change in TRD
188 dimension exceeded the limit of resolution (± 1.6 mm) and the overall ultrasound-derived
189 complexity score was unchanged in both groups.

190

191 The median duration of surgery was greater in the ranibizumab group (63 minutes) than the
192 control group (51 minutes) (Table 3; $P=0.53$); intraoperative haemorrhage scores were
193 similar as were the number of endodiathermy and back-flush cannula applications. The
194 median surgeon-defined complexity score based on retinal features present at the start of
195 surgery was slightly higher for the ranibizumab group but the median overall subjective
196 surgical difficulty score was lower and there were fewer iatrogenic retinal breaks.

197

198 Any residual vitreous cavity haemorrhage following vitrectomy surgery resolved
199 progressively in both groups. At six weeks after surgery two of fifteen subjects in the control
200 group, and one of thirteen subjects in the ranibizumab group who had not received silicone
201 oil had visible vitreous cavity haemorrhage. While this was moderate in the ranibizumab
202 group, in the control group both had a severe grade of haemorrhage. Moderate or severe
203 residual haemorrhage persisted in 2 eyes of the control group at 12 weeks following surgery,
204 but had fully resolved in the subject in the ranibizumab group.

205

206 At baseline, fluorescein angiograms were gradable in only a minority of participants (3 of the
207 control group and 5 of the ranibizumab group) owing to media opacity and/or distortion of
208 foveal anatomy in the majority. All gradable angiograms demonstrated moderate to severe
209 perifoveal capillary non-perfusion. At 12 weeks, the mean (SD) foveal avascular zone
210 greatest linear dimension was 637 (236) μm in the control group (n=9) and 765 (576) μm in
211 the ranibizumab group (n=10); the foveal avascular zone area was 0.315 (0.147) mm^2 in the
212 control group and 0.403 (0.562) mm^2 in the ranibizumab group. The median total score for
213 perifoveal capillary non-perfusion was 14 in both groups, indicating scores of 3-4 (moderate
214 to severe) in each of the four quadrants.

215 Ocular and non-ocular adverse events were in keeping with previously published trials of
216 anti-VEGF agents. The most common adverse event was upper respiratory tract infection
217 which occurred more commonly in the control group. There were no arterial thrombo-embolic
218 events or cases of endophthalmitis. There was one serious adverse event in each group.
219 One participant in the control group was admitted to hospital for management of
220 hypoglycaemia 10 weeks after surgery, and one participant in the ranibizumab group was
221 admitted for management of raised intraocular pressure following vitrectomy surgery, an
222 event judged unlikely to be related to study drug administration. Vitreous cavity haemorrhage
223 was more frequent in the control group than in the ranibizumab group.

224 **DISCUSSION**

225 The results of this trial confirm significant improvement in mean visual acuity 12 weeks
226 following vitreoretinal surgery for advanced proliferative retinopathy, with or without
227 ranibizumab pre-treatment, consistent with previous reports.¹ Our findings also suggest a
228 modest additional benefit of intravitreal injection of ranibizumab one week prior to surgery,
229 with higher mean visual acuity and greater mean improvement in visual acuity at 12 weeks.
230 The difference in acuity in this pilot study is not statistically significant. On the basis of these
231 data, we calculate that 348 subjects in each group (696 in total) would be required to
232 determine a clinically relevant treatment difference of 5.9 letters with 90% power and 5%
233 significance, allowing for 5% loss to follow-up.

234 Our findings of reduced postoperative vitreous cavity haemorrhage associated with
235 ranibizumab pre-treatment in vitrectomy surgery are consistent with a previous report that
236 this also reduces intraoperative haemorrhage during surgery.⁹ Earlier studies have shown
237 conflicting results regarding the utility of bevacizumab in preventing recurrent haemorrhage,
238 for example Romano *et al.* found that although pre-operative injection could reduce the
239 number of recurrent haemorrhages,¹² giving the drug as an intra-operative adjunct did not
240 prevent post-operative vitreous cavity haemorrhage.¹¹ Data from the 2015 update to the
241 Cochrane review of bevacizumab for the prevention of post-operative vitreous cavity
242 haemorrhage suggest that treatment results in 130 fewer people per 1000 experiencing early
243 post-operative haemorrhage, although there is considerable heterogeneity of methodology in
244 the trials included in this systematic review.⁸

245 We found that ranibizumab pre-treatment was associated with a lower intraoperative
246 bleeding score, greater reduction in retinal neovascularisation and lower prevalence of
247 persistent vitreous cavity haemorrhage. However, in contrast to previous studies and a
248 meta-analysis of these studies that have reported shorter surgical duration or fewer
249 instrument exchanges following anti-VEGF prior to surgery for proliferative diabetic

250 retinopathy,^{4, 7} we found that the median surgical complexity score was no lower, the mean
251 duration of vitrectomy was no shorter, and the use of the backflush cannula and
252 endodiathermy were similar.

253 Previous studies have highlighted concerns about the development or progression of
254 tractional retinal detachment associated with progressive fibrosis following intravitreal
255 administration of anti-VEGF agents, especially in the absence of prior panretinal
256 photocoagulation.^{13, 14} Despite the presence of dense media opacity in many, we were able
257 to determine the impact of ranibizumab pre-treatment on the extent of tractional retinal
258 detachment prior to surgery in all participants by the use of ultrasonography. In our study, in
259 which all subjects had been managed previously by panretinal photocoagulation, we
260 identified no effect of ranibizumab injection on extension of retinal detachment after 7 days.
261 We chose this interval between injection and surgery to maximise the possibility of benefit
262 while minimising the risk of harm, and this finding from ultrasound evaluation suggests that
263 administering ranibizumab in the setting of previously treated proliferative retinopathy may
264 be safe in this regard.

265 We identified significant macular ischemia in the participants in both groups but found no
266 evidence of an impact of intervention in either. Although we conclude that its safety profile
267 appears to be favourable, the number of subjects in whom angiography was feasible is
268 insufficient to draw firm conclusions about the impact of ranibizumab injection on the extent
269 of macular ischemia in this context.

270 The strengths of our study are that it was randomised and double-masked with a sham
271 control arm. Since the study included multiple surgeons, all of whom were experienced in
272 vitrectomy surgery for advanced diabetic retinopathy, the findings are broadly generalisable.
273 The ability to draw firm conclusions is limited by the small number of subjects included and
274 the inherent heterogeneity of the condition, in particular the variability of management of
275 proliferative retinopathy prior to enrolment in the study and difficulty in controlling for variable

276 amounts of prior panretinal photocoagulation. However, the results provide a valuable
277 indication of the substantial size of the trial that would be needed to confirm with confidence
278 the impact of ranibizumab pre-treatment in vitrectomy surgery for advanced diabetic
279 retinopathy.

280

281 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

282 We are grateful to David Yorston and Edward Hughes for constructive advice on design of
283 the trial.

284

285 **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

286 The study was part funded by an unrestricted research grant from Novartis Pharmaceuticals,
287 UK, Ltd.

288 Dr Comyn has received has received travel support from Novartis.

289

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329 endothelial growth factor and connective tissue growth factor by bevacizumab causes the
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331

332 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

333 Figure 1A and B – Colour fundus photograph (A) and ultrasound image (B) to show
334 advanced proliferative diabetic retinopathy. The fundus image shows evidence of
335 fibrovascular proliferation, pre-retinal haemorrhage and tractional retinal detachment
336 involving the macula, while the ultrasound shows partial posterior vitreous detachment with
337 vitreous attachment to tractional retinal detachment. Calliper placement shows measurement
338 of height and longitudinal base dimension of tractional detachment.

339

340 Figure 2 – Box plots to show visual acuity (VA) by treatment group, shown as mean \pm
341 standard deviation Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study letter score

342

343

Table 1. Participants in a pilot randomised study of ranibizumab pre-treatment in diabetic vitrectomy

	Control	Ranibizumab
Total number of participants	15	15
Female gender (number of participants)	9 (60%)	3 (20%)
Age (years); mean (SD)	48.7 (18)	57.1 (14)
Ethnicity: (number of participants)		
White or white British	8 (53%)	8 (53%)
Black or black British	2 (13%)	2 (13%)
Asian or Asian British	2 (13%)	3 (20%)
Other	3 (20%)	1 (7%)
Not recorded	0	1 (7%)
Type of diabetes		
Type 1 (number of participants)	6 (40%)	4 (27%)
Type 2 (number of participants)	9 (60%)	11 (73%)
Duration of diabetes (years); median (IQR)	21 (15, 28)	19 (10, 23)
Systolic blood pressure (mmHg)	132 (22)	128 (22)
Diastolic blood pressure (mmHg)	75 (9)	78 (11)
HbA _{1c} (glycosylated haemoglobin, %)	9.3 (1.8) (n=13)	8.2 (1.1) (n=14)
Ocular characteristics		
ETDRS letter score	32.3 (19)	28.5 (27)
RAPD present (number)	3 (20%)	4 (27%)
Rubeosis present (number)	0	0
Anterior chamber inflammation grade (0-4)	0	0
Intraocular pressure (mmHg)	16.5 (4)	16.8 (3)
Lens status		
Pseudophakic	3 (20.0%)	5 (33.3%)
Cataract grade 0	4 (26.7%)	4 (26.7%)
1	6 (40.0%)	5 (33.3%)
2	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)
3	1 (6.7%)	0
4	0	0
Vitreous haemorrhage score		
0 (no haemorrhage)	3 (20.0%)	6 (40.0%)
1 (minor haemorrhage)	8 (53.3%)	5 (33.3%)
2 (moderate haemorrhage - disc and large vessels visible)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)
3 (severe haemorrhage - no fundus view)	2 (13.3%)	3 (20.0%)

Data shown as mean (SD) for normally distributed variables. ETDRS - Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study; RAPD - relative afferent pupillary defect.

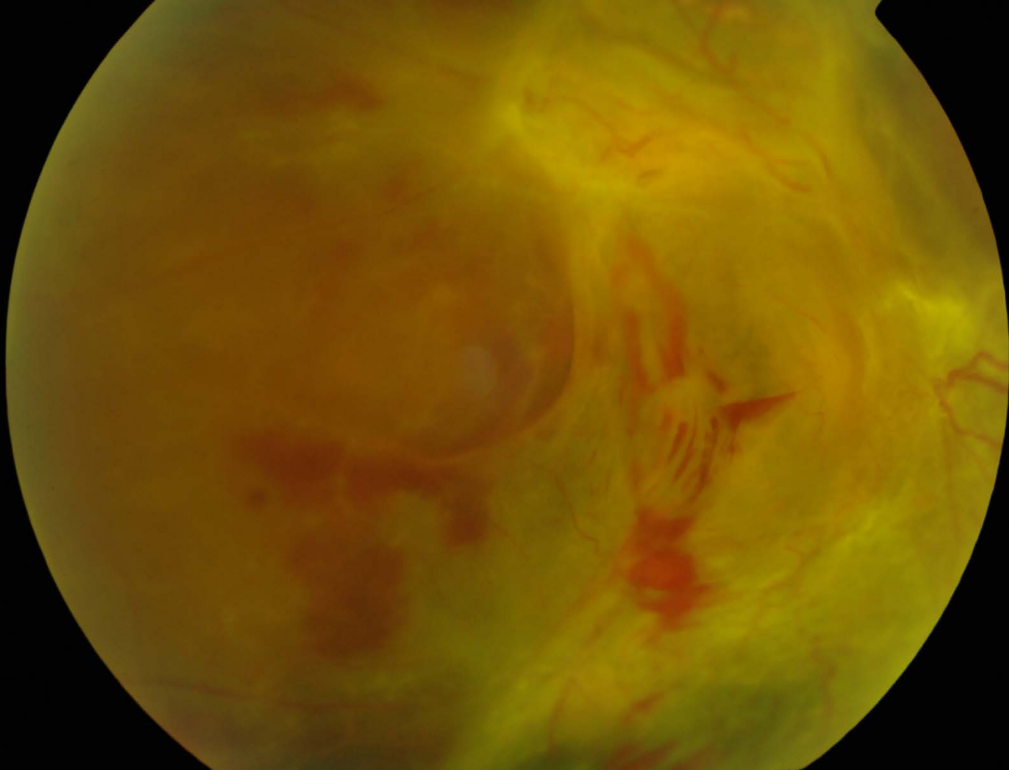
Table 2. Tractional retinal detachment characteristics following study injection in a randomised trial of ranibizumab prior to diabetic vitrectomy.

	Control		Ranibizumab	
	Baseline	1 week	Baseline	1 week
TRD characteristics from ultrasound				
Number of eyes with TRD	6 (40%)	7 (47%)	10 (67%)	11 (73%)
Number of eyes with macula TRD involving	5 (83%)	5 (71%)	5 (50%)	5 (45%)
Dimensions of TRD (mean (SD)) Height (mm) Base (mm)	2.2(0.5) 11.9(5.0) x 13.2(4.6)	2.5(0.6) 12.6(5.3) x 13.5(4.4)	2.4(0.9) 11.9(4.7) x 11.5(5.3)	2.4(1.0) 12.1(5.0) x 12.5 (6.2)
Ultrasound-derived complexity score (0-8; median)	4	4	5	5
TRD characteristics from colour imaging (baseline only)				
Number with gradable images	9	-	8	-
Absent	1		4	
Hammock	3		3	
Diffuse Central	3		0	
Tabletop	2		1	

TRD - tractional retinal detachment; RRD - rhegmatogenous retinal detachment.

Table 3. Intraoperative parameters in a trial of ranibizumab in diabetic vitrectomy

	Control	Ranibizumab	
Surgeon-determined complexity score 0 (simple) - 8 (highly complex) (median score)	4	5	
Duration of vitrectomy (mins) median (interquartile range)	51 (38-82)	63 (42-87)	P=0.53, Wilcoxon Rank-Sum test
Intraoperative bleeding score (median score) 0 (none) - 3 (severe)	2	2	
Endodiathermy applications (mean)	1.5	1.1	
Backflush cannula applications (mean)	2.8	2.5	
Number of iatrogenic retinal breaks (total)	15	12	
Tamponnade agent (number of participants)			
None	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	
Sulphur hexafluoride	11 (73%)	9 (60%)	
Perfluoropropane	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	
Silicone oil	0 (0%)	2 (13%)	
Overall surgical difficulty score (median score) Scale 0 (simple) - 4 (very difficult)	3	2	



15L8-S

140MHz 45mm

Orbits

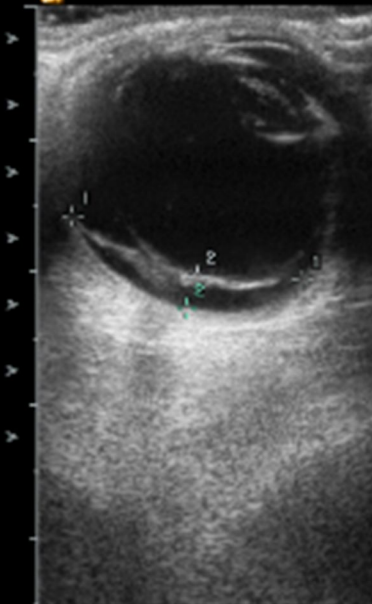
General

95dB S2f+1/3/2

Gain= 17dB $\Delta=2$

S8

RT SUP LONG

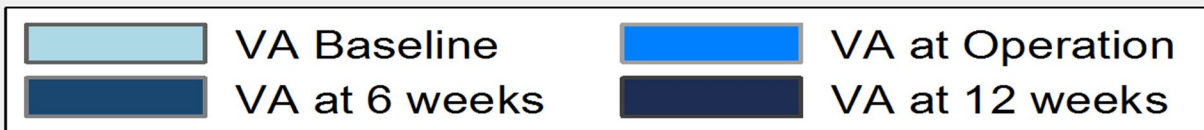
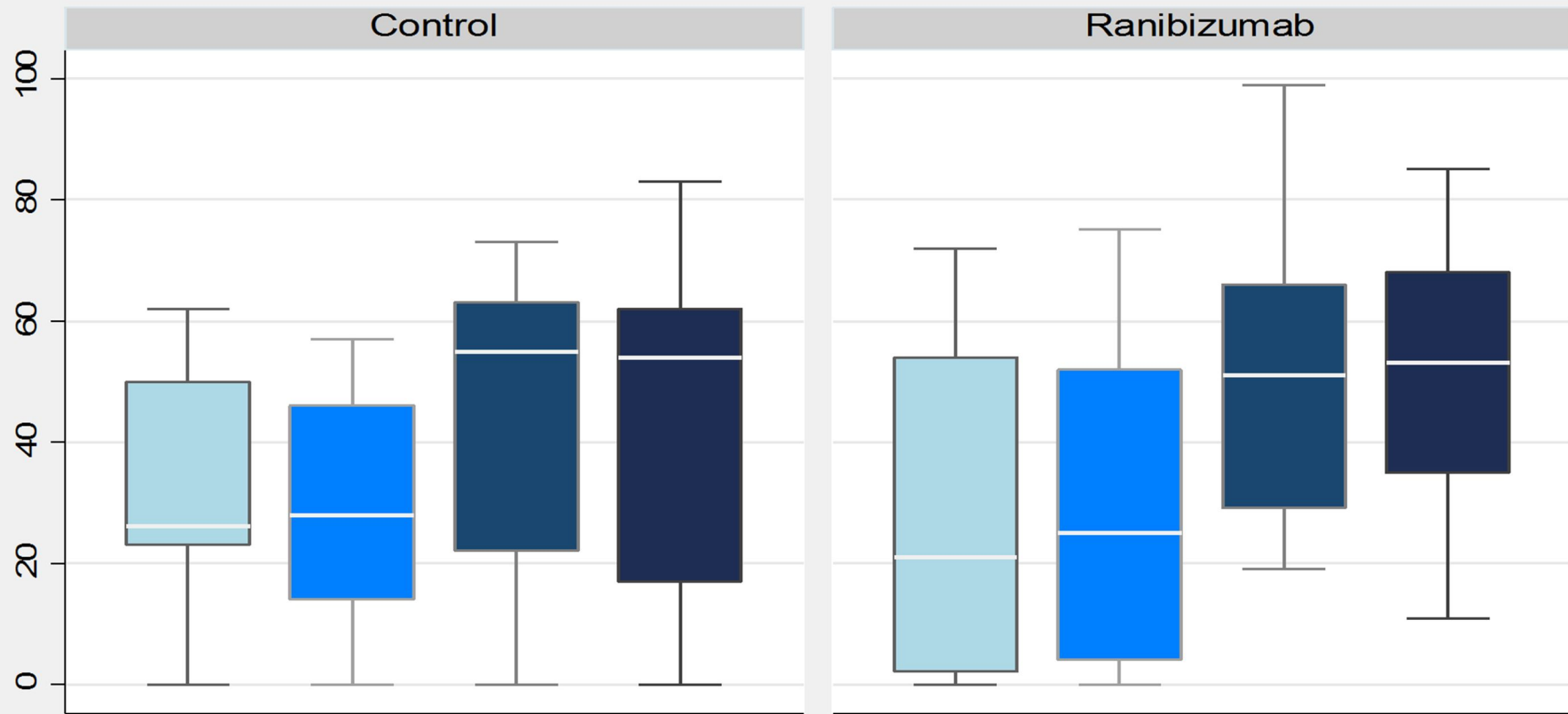


-----1-----

Dist = 1.794cm

-----2-----

Dist = 0.258cm



Graphs by Treatment