Uveitis (chronic eye inflammation)

a) Definition

The term uveitis describes an inflammation of the pigmented layer of skin between the inner retina and the outer fibrous layer (uvea). The uvea is composed of the iris, the ciliary body (corpus ciliare) and the choroid coat (chlorioidea).

b) Symptoms of Uveitis

- Increased Glare Sensitivity
- Blurred Vision
- Pain and Reddenig of the Eye
- Slow Degradation of Vision

c) Different Forms of Uveitis

- *ritis – the choroid coat is inflamed in the area of the iris*
- *Cyclitis – affects the central parts of the eye, especially the ciliary body*
- *Choroiditis – inflammation of the central ocular fundus*

d) Causes of Uveitis

In most cases the cause of an uveitis remains unknown. In the first third of this century tuberculosis and syphilis were believed to be the major causes of uveitis. Later, uveitis was traced back to inflammatory „foci“ within the organism (teeth, tonsils). Today, uveitis is attributed to immunopathological processes. Uveitis can be caused by viruses (e.g. mumps, herpes), spores (e.g. candida albicans) or parasites (e.g. toxoplasmosis).

e) Common Treatment Methods

- Typical, endogenous uveitis is treated with Corticosteroids (Cortisone) though the disadvantages of long-term use of this type of medication are well documented.
- Cytostatic Immunosuppressants. This treatment may have a positive effect in individual cases, but especially for children it comes with unpredictable risks.
- Ciclosporine A was used to treat uveitis but failed to convince
- Surgical removal of pronounced inflammatory vitreous opacities (vitritis).
- Climatotherapy

f) The Influence of Sunlight on Chronic Inflammatory Diseases in the Dead Sea Region

Personal observation by both affected patients themselves and ophthalmologists involved in treating uveitis suggested that exposure to intensive light may also lead to receding inflammatory symptoms of chronic intra-ocular inflammations. The climate of the Dead Sea region fits this treatment especially well. The region is located 400 meters below sea level with air that is almost completely allergen free. UV radiation with a wavelength of 356 nm predominates whereas the erythema producing wavelength of 313 nm is greatly reduced. In addition, our clinic offers a positive environment in which our patients do not have to worry about their everyday stress and instead experience a feeling of togetherness with people in a similar situation.

g) Therapy in the Dead Sea Region

On the first day of their stay patients are examined by both an internist and a specialist doctor. Following this, an individual treatment planis prepared and discussed with the patients. The most important part of the therapy is sun bathing while lying down so that a large part of the skin is exposed to UV radiation. Sitting up the shoulders would get sunburn very fast and make further sun bathing uncomfortable. Uveitis patients slowly increase the amount of time they spend sun bathing. In the beginning they expose themselves to the sun for one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. Depending on a patient‘s type of skin this is slowly increased to 5 to 6 hours per day. After one week or ten days at the maximum a patient reaches the maximum amount of time that can be spent in the sun. The therapy is accompanied by medical attendance (ophthalmologist and general practicioner). Upon completing the climatotherapy patients receive a comprehensive final examination and the medical report is filed. The ideal times for this therapy are from april to the end of Juli and from september to october.

Treatment Information

Recommended Treatment Period	Recommended Duration
April – October	4 – 6 Weeks