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**Title:** Quantifying subclinical and longitudinal microvascular changes following episcleral plaque brachytherapy (EPB) using spectral-domain OCT angiography.

**Short Title:** Longitudinal Analysis of OCTA in EPB-treated eyes.

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#### **Abbreviations:**

EPB	Episcleral Plaque Brachytherapy
FA	Fluorescein Angiography
FIR	Flow Impairment Region
OCT(A)	Optical Coherence Tomography (Angiography)
RR	Radiation Retinopathy
VDI	Vessel Diameter Index
VSD	Vessel Skeleton Density

4 **Abstract**

5 **Background:** I-125 episcleral plaque brachytherapy (EPB) is standard-of-care for globe-  
6 conserving treatment of medium-sized choroidal melanomas. Radiation retinopathy is a potential  
7 consequence of treatment, characterized by deleterious effects on retinal microvasculature. We  
8 investigated the application of Optical Coherence Tomography Angiography (OCTA) for  
9 detecting and longitudinally monitoring I-125 episcleral plaque brachytherapy induced radiation  
10 retinopathy.

11  
12 **Methods:** High resolution OCTA of the central 3x3mm macula were obtained from I-25  
13 episcleral plaque brachytherapy treated and untreated fellow eyes of 62 patients. Capillary  
14 density (vessel skeleton density, VSD) and caliber (vessel diameter index, VDI) were quantified  
15 using previously validated semi-automated algorithms. Nonperfusion was also quantified as flow  
16 impairment regions (FIR). Exams from treated and fellow eyes obtained pre-treatment and at 6-  
17 month, 1-year, and 2-year intervals were compared using generalized estimating equation linear  
18 models. Dosimetry maps were used to evaluate spatial correlation between radiation dose and  
19 microvascular metrics.

20  
21 **Results:** Mean time from treatment to last follow-up was 10.8 months. Mean $\pm$ SD and median  
22 radiation dose at the fovea were  $64.5 \pm 76$  Gy and 32.0 Gy, respectively. Preoperative logMAR  
23 (Snellen) mean visual acuity was  $0.26 \pm 0.05$  (~20/35) and  $0.08 \pm 0.02$  (~20/25) in treated and  
24 fellow eyes, respectively. At 6 months, treated eyes had significantly lower VSD ( $0.147 \pm 0.003$   
25 vs  $0.155 \pm 0.002$ ;  $p = 0.023$ ) and higher FIR ( $1.95 \pm 0.176$  vs  $1.45 \pm 0.099$ ;  $p = 0.018$ ) compared  
26 to fellow eyes. There was a significant decrease in VSD and a corresponding increase in FIR

27 even for treated eyes without clinically identifiable retinopathy at 6 months. VDI was  
28 significantly higher in treated eyes than in fellow eyes at 2 years ( $2.93 \pm 0.022$  vs  $2.84 \pm 0.016$ ;  $p$   
29 = 0.002). Microvascular changes were spatially correlated with a radiation gradient of 85-250 Gy  
30 across the fovea.

31

32 **Conclusions:** OCTA can be used to quantify and monitor EPB induced radiation, and can detect  
33 vascular abnormalities even in the absence of clinically observable retinopathy. OCTA may  
34 therefore be useful in investigating treatment interventions that aim to delay EPB-induced  
35 radiation retinopathy.

## 36 **Introduction**

37 The development of radiation retinopathy (RR) following treatment of choroidal melanoma with  
38 episcleral plaque brachytherapy (EPB) can have deleterious effects on retinal microvasculature  
39 that leads to permanent visual decline. The Collaborative Ocular Melanoma Study (COMS)  
40 validated EPB as standard-of-care for globe-conserving treatment of medium-sized choroidal  
41 melanomas.(1) Despite the selection of iodine-125 (I-125) and gold shielding to minimize  
42 adverse radiation effects, visual morbidity remains high, with only 43% of patients maintaining  
43 visual acuity of 20/200 or better 3 years after treatment with standard COMS plaques.(2) Some  
44 reports indicate that adverse radiation effects can be partially mitigated through the use of 3D  
45 conformal treatment planning software and customized collimated plaques to decrease the  
46 radiation dose to critical visual structures (e.g. the fovea).(3, 4) The onset of RR varies greatly,  
47 ranging from as early as 1 month to 15 years, but it most commonly occurs between 6 months  
48 and 3 years after treatment.(5) The location of the tumor, and thus the dose to the fovea, is  
49 critical but not the sole risk factor. RR is primarily a vascular disease and shares many clinical  
50 features with diabetic retinopathy including damage to capillaries, which leads to variable  
51 degrees of hyperpermeability, retinal ischemia, and neovascularization.(6)

52

53 While clinical features of RR, including dot-blot hemorrhages, microaneurysms, and macular  
54 edema can be seen on exam, as with diabetic retinopathy, there is underlying damage present  
55 before these clinical features manifest. Fluorescein angiography (FA) can reveal early areas of  
56 non-perfusion and vascular leakage.(7-9) OCT angiography (OCTA) has been used to non-  
57 invasively demonstrate morphologic features of microvasculature with excellent resolution.(10-  
58 13) By generating detailed depth-resolved images, OCTA can potentially be used to detect and

59 monitor capillary-level aberrations in blood flow at multiple timepoints early in the course of  
60 RR. To date, there have been a few studies that employ OCTA to assess microvascular changes  
61 in RR. Two recent studies used binarized OCT angiograms to demonstrate a decrease in  
62 parafoveal (14, 15) and peripapillary capillary (16, 17) density in irradiated eyes compared to  
63 fellow eyes. To our knowledge, no studies have performed longitudinal analysis to identify early  
64 microvascular changes (prior to 1 year) in treated eyes, nor have any used OCTA to explore a  
65 possible spatial correlation between these changes and radiation dose.

66  
67 In the present study, we employed longitudinal analysis of OCT angiograms to further determine  
68 what quantifiable morphologic differences exist in the microvasculature between treated and  
69 fellow eyes over time, as well as how early in the course of RR these differences can be detected.  
70 More specifically, we used previously described OCTA metrics, (11, 18) vessel skeleton density  
71 (VSD) and vessel diameter index (VDI), to quantitatively assess changes in retinal vascular  
72 networks. We have previously employed these metrics to quantify vascular density and diameter  
73 in diabetic retinopathy and uveitis.(11, 13) We also report flow impairment region (FIR), which  
74 is further detailed in the methods section, to quantify areas of subclinical non-perfusion larger  
75 than a set threshold.

76

## 77 **Methods**

78 Approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the University of  
79 Southern California, and the described research adhered to the tenets of the Declaration of  
80 Helsinki. This was a retrospective, consecutive series of 62 adult patients treated with I-125  
81 episcleral plaque brachytherapy (EPB) for medium sized choroidal melanoma by one of two

82 ocular oncologists (JB, JK) at the USC Roski Eye Institute. Any subject with history of  
83 intraocular melanoma and plaque brachytherapy was eligible for inclusion. Treatment planning  
84 and surgery were performed as previously described with stereotactic plaque brachytherapy  
85 radiation treatment planning platform (Plaque Simulator; Eye Physics, LLC; Los Alamitos, CA);  
86 a dose of 85 Gy at a rate of 0.5 Gy/hr was prescribed to the apex of the lesion or to 5mm height,  
87 whichever was greater with a 2mm margin at the base.(19) Subjects with media opacity  
88 impairing visualization of the macula, pre-existing retinal vascular disease (diabetic retinopathy,  
89 retinal vein occlusion, choroidal neovascularization), or pre-existing subretinal fluid or macular  
90 edema prior to plaque placement were excluded from the study. Subjects with direct tumor  
91 involvement in the 3x3mm perifoveal region were also excluded as this was the area assessed by  
92 OCTA. Patient demographics, including age and gender, were abstracted from the medical  
93 record. Clinical data collected included visual acuity, radiation dose to fovea, follow-up time,  
94 and presence of clinically evident radiation retinopathy as determined by the Finger criteria.(8)  
95 Visual acuity was reported as logMAR (Snellen equivalent).

96

#### 97 OCTA Imaging and Image Analysis

98 OCTA was performed in both the irradiated eye and the fellow non-irradiated eye for each  
99 patient during the patient's regularly scheduled clinic visits. Imaging was performed with a  
100 commercially available, FDA-approved, spectral-domain OCTA platform (Angioplex; Zeiss  
101 Meditec; Dublin, CA). High resolution 3x3mm OCT angiograms centered on the fovea with a  
102 signal strength greater than 7/10 were included for analysis. Images with significant motion  
103 artifacts that obscured the vascular architecture were excluded from analysis. For any eye with  
104 multiple images on a single date, the highest quality image was chosen. A previously described

105 semi-automated algorithm was used for quantitative analysis of vessel skeletal density (VSD),  
106 vessel diameter index (VDI), and flow impairment region (FIR).(11, 18) Briefly, VSD is defined  
107 as a unitless proportion of the total length (in pixels) of all skeletonized vessels divided by the  
108 total number of pixels in the image window, which reflects capillary density. VDI is defined as a  
109 unitless proportion of the total vessel area divided by the total skeletonized vessel area, which  
110 reflects average vessel diameter. Lastly, FIR is defined as the sum of avascular areas in an  
111 image larger than a pre-defined threshold area, which in this study was set at  $0.002\text{mm}^2$  to reflect  
112 the maximum threshold for physiologic intercapillary distance. This value was based on an  
113 estimate from histologic analysis that the avascular periarteriolar region is  $\sim 50\mu\text{m}$ .(20) A  
114  $0.002\text{mm}^2$  threshold closely approximates the area of a circle with this diameter.

115

#### 116 Data Analyses

117 The effect of radiation therapy on the OCTA metrics (VSD, FIR and VDI) was assessed  
118 longitudinally. Data acquired included pretreatment exams obtained prior to surgery, as well as  
119 post-treatment exams binned into 6-month (range 3-9 months), 1-year (range 9-18 months) and  
120 2-year (range 18-30 months) groups. Summary OCTA metrics were compared between  
121 irradiated and fellow eyes at the different time intervals using generalized estimating equation  
122 (GEE) linear models. In the GEE models, the OCTA metrics were each used as predictor  
123 variables of the treatment status of the eyes —irradiated eye versus fellow eye. Summary OCTA  
124 metrics for treated eyes were also compared between baseline and the various follow-up  
125 timepoints. Statistical significance was defined when the p-value associated with the odds ratio  
126 of the univariate model was less than 0.05. GEE models allow for the analysis of longitudinal

127 repeated measures, as well as correlated fellow eye data.(21) When the number of radiated and  
128 fellow eyes were balanced, paired t-statistic or Wilcoxon sign-ranked tests were also used.  
129  
130 The radiation dose-related changes of the OCTA metrics were also investigated. The OCTA  
131 metrics between high-dose eyes (foveal radiation >45 Gy) were compared to low-dose eyes  
132 (foveal radiation <15 Gy). These thresholds were chosen based on published dose tolerance  
133 limits of the retina.(22) A second exploratory approach was adapted to assess if there was spatial  
134 correlation between radiation dose and microvascular density within the 3x3mm foveal regions  
135 imaged. To evaluate this “within eye” correlation, the last acquired OCT angiograms (over the  
136 defined study period) of the irradiated eyes were investigated and five eyes which displayed  
137 spatial gradients in microvascular density were subjectively selected for further evaluation. EPB  
138 dosimetry maps of these eyes were then generated using Eye Physics Plaque Simulator software  
139 (Eye Physics, LLC; Los Alamitos, CA) developed previously at the University of Southern  
140 California.(23-25) For each case, dosimetry maps were superimposed on both the original OCT  
141 angiograms and their corresponding fundus photos for analysis.

142

## 143 **Results**

144 We report the results of 62 participants who underwent EPB therapy. Table 1 summarizes the  
145 demographic and clinical characteristics of the study population. Table 2 summarizes the results  
146 of the OCTA metrics compared between EPB-treated and untreated fellow eyes.

147 **Table 1. Patient demographics and clinical data.**

Total Number of Participants	62	148
Age, yrs		149
Mean±SD	62.9±13.8	
Median [IQR]	65.5 [57.0-72.9]	150
Female Gender (% female)	34 (55.7%)	
Follow-up time, yrs		151
Mean±SD	0.9±0.4	
Median [IQR]	0.9 [0.6-1.3]	152
Time from plaque to 1 <sup>st</sup> OCTA, yrs		153
Mean±SD	1.3±0.8	
Median [IQR]	1.3 [0.5-1.9]	154

155

156 **Table 2. Clinical and OCTA measures by eye.**

Mean±SEM	EPB Treated	Fellow Eye	p-value
Baseline BCVA (LogMAR)	0.26±0.05	0.08±0.02	<0.001
Vessel Skeleton Density			
Baseline	0.151±0.003	0.155±0.002	0.256
6 months	0.147±0.003	0.155±0.002	<b>0.023</b>
12 months	0.143±0.004	0.156±0.003	<b>0.013</b>
24 months	0.142±0.004	0.156±0.002	<b>0.008</b>
Vessel Diameter Index			
Baseline	2.85±0.020	2.86±0.012	0.972
6 months	2.85±0.021	2.85±0.016	0.699
12 months	2.91±0.040	2.83±0.013	0.062
24 months	2.93±0.022	2.84±0.016	<b>0.002</b>
Flow Impairment Region			
Baseline	1.65±0.175	1.49±0.120	0.407
6 months	1.95±0.176	1.45±0.099	<b>0.018</b>
12 months	2.15±0.230	1.48±0.157	<b>0.027</b>
24 months	2.21±0.230	1.45±0.086	<b>0.007</b>
Radiation dose, Gy (mean±SD, median [IQR])			166
Tumor Apex	99.4±25, 86.8 [85-111]		167
Fovea*	64.5±76, 32.0 [18-81]		168
*The median dose to the fovea (32 Gy) is below published thresholds for clinically-evident radiation damage (35 Gy). EPB = Episcleral Plaque Brachytherapy.			

169 Baseline

170 Prior to EPB, eyes with melanoma had significantly lower visual acuity compared to fellow eyes;  
171 however, there were no significant differences in VSD, VDI, or FIR at baseline between eyes  
172 with melanoma and the contralateral eyes (Table 2).

173

174 Six Month Follow-Up

175 Fifteen subjects had OCT angiograms at 6 months after EPB. Only one of these (representing  
176 6.7%) demonstrated even minimal evidence of radiation retinopathy on clinical examination.  
177 However, the VSD and FIR metrics of OCTA assessment showed significantly lower VSD and  
178 higher FIR for the treated eyes compared to fellow eyes respectively (Table 2). These changes  
179 can also be appreciated qualitatively in maps of VSD and FIR (Figure 1). Importantly, among  
180 treated eyes that had no clinically identifiable radiation retinopathy at this follow-up period, and  
181 also had pre-treatment exams for direct comparison (n=5), there was still a significantly  
182 decreased VSD ( $0.146\pm 0.011$  [6 months] vs  $0.158\pm 0.005$  [baseline];  $p = 0.035$ ) and an increased  
183 FIR ( $1.76\pm 0.665$  [6 months] vs  $1.28\pm 0.339$  [baseline];  $p = 0.043$ ).

184

185 **Fig 1. Processed OCT angiograms from treated and fellow eyes of a single patient.**

186 OCT angiograms from the treated (OS) and fellow eye (OD) of a 20-year-old female  
187 demonstrate marked qualitative differences in parafoveal vessel density (column 1). The OCT  
188 angiogram of each eye was obtained 263 days (8.6 months) following placement in the treated  
189 eye with a 46.0 Gy dose at the fovea. Visual acuity at the time of image acquisition was 20/350  
190 in the treated eye and 20/20 in the fellow eye. Skeletonized OCT angiograms with accompanying  
191 skeleton density heat maps were generated (columns 2 and 3). Warmer colors reflect areas of  
192 greater vessel skeleton density (VSD), with relative differences defined on the accompanying

193 color scale demonstrating decreased VSD in the treated eyes. Pseudocolor flow impairment maps  
194 (column 4) demonstrate absent flow signal (white areas). The flow impairment region was  
195 markedly increased in the treated eye.

196

#### 197 One Year Follow-Up

198 At 12 months after EPB, visual acuity was  $0.29 \pm 0.075$  (~20/40) and  $0.06 \pm 0.016$  (~20/20) in the  
199 treated and fellow eyes respectively ( $p = 0.005$ ). 25% (4 of 16) of treated eyes with exams at this  
200 time point demonstrated at least minimal evidence of radiation retinopathy on clinical  
201 examination. Treated eyes also showed a significant lower VSD and higher FIR compared to  
202 fellow eyes (Table 2).

203

#### 204 Two Year Follow-Up

205 At 24 months after EPB, visual acuity was  $0.37 \pm 0.09$  (~20/45) and  $0.10 \pm 0.06$  (~20/25) in the  
206 treated and fellow eyes respectively ( $p = 0.015$ ). 75% (12 of 16) of treated eyes with exams at  
207 this time point demonstrated at least minimal evidence of radiation retinopathy on clinical  
208 examination. Treated eyes also showed a significantly lower VSD compared to fellow eyes  
209 (Table 2). In general, the difference in all metrics between treated and fellow eyes grew over  
210 time and corresponded with increasing rates of clinically identifiable radiation retinopathy in  
211 treated eyes (Figure 2).

212

#### 213 **Fig 2. Longitudinal clinical and quantitative OCTA data.**

214 All panels reflect data from our overall cohort. Over the course of our 2-year follow-up period,  
215 there was an increasing percentage of treated eyes with clinically identifiable radiation  
216 retinopathy at each interval (A). Compared to fellow eyes over this period, treated eyes showed

217 decreasing vessel skeleton density (VSD) (B), increasing flow impairment region (C), and  
218 increasing vessel diameter index (D). Relative significance between treated and fellow eyes at  
219 each time point is marked by asterisks, and error bars reflect standard error of the mean.

220

### 221 Radiation Dose Correlation with OCTA Changes

222 We found significant differences in the OCTA metrics VSD and FIR over the follow-up period  
223 when the overall cohort was divided into high and low dose foveal radiation subgroups (>45 Gy  
224 [n=9] vs <15 Gy [n=3]): VSD ( $0.145 \pm 0.002$  [high dose] (26) vs  $0.154 \pm 0.001$  (27),  $p < 0.0001$ )  
225 and FIR ( $2.04 \pm 0.10$  (26) vs  $1.59 \pm 0.06$  (27),  $p < 0.0001$ ). The VDI metric was however not  
226 significantly different between the high dose and low dose classification ( $2.88 \pm 0.02$  (26) vs  
227  $2.83 \pm 0.08$  (27),  $p = 0.21$ ).

228

229 The five 3x3mm OCT angiograms selected for the “within eye” dose-effect analysis had the  
230 following range of radiation doses across the fovea: Case 1 - 85-250 Gy; Case 2 - 30-70 Gy;  
231 Case 3 - 25-60 Gy; Case 4 - 40-60 Gy; and Case 5 - 8-12 Gy. Of these, the case with the greatest  
232 radiation gradient across the fovea (Case 1) had EPB dosimetry gradient that spatially correlated  
233 with the microvascular gradient on the 3x3mm OCT angiogram. The longitudinal OCTA  
234 findings of Case 1 are illustrated in Figure 3, and the registered EPB dosimetry map and OCTA  
235 microvasculature is illustrated in Figure 4. The dose-dependent nature of impaired perfusion over  
236 time can be appreciated from Figure 3 when the EPB dosimetry map in Figure 4 is taken into  
237 account. The remaining cases did not appear to have any spatially correlated microvascular  
238 changes within the 3x3mm window.

239 **Fig 3. Longitudinal skeleton density and flow impairment maps of a treated eye.**

240 This patient is a 65-year-old male who received 212 Gy to the fovea (OD), with a range of 85-  
241 250 Gy across the standard 3x3mm OCT angiogram (Case 1). OCT angiograms were acquired at  
242 post-operative months (POM) 14, 26, and 30. The visual acuity of the treated eye at these dates  
243 was 20/25, 20/25, and 20/80 respectively. The visual acuity of the fellow eye at the same time  
244 points (OCTA images not shown) was 20/25, 20/20, and 20/25, respectively. In the skeletonized  
245 image, impaired perfusion is visible inferiorly at POM 26 compared to POM 14, with worsening  
246 perfusion at POM 30 (column 1). The loss of skeleton density is more clearly visualized in the  
247 heat map (column 2). Warmer colors reflect areas of greater vessel skeleton density, with relative  
248 differences defined on the color scale. A parallel trend is seen in the flow impairment region  
249 images (column 3).

250

251 **Fig 4. Spatial correlation of parafoveal microvascular changes with radiation dose.**

252 Panel A shows the pre-treatment fundus image of a subject (Case 1) showing the choroidal  
253 melanoma. Panel B is a computed dosimetry simulation projected onto the pre-treatment fundus  
254 image. A 3x3mm OCT angiogram of the eye was registered with the image using vessel  
255 bifurcation landmarks. Dosimetry contour lines and dosimetry tints delineate areas of the eye that  
256 received specific doses of radiation from the plaque. Panel C is an enlarged skeletonized 3x3mm  
257 OCT angiogram of the eye at post-op month 30 with the corresponding dosimetry contour lines.  
258 Note the inferior areas of decreased vascular density (impaired perfusion) in the 3x3mm image,  
259 which corresponds with the higher doses delivered inferiorly.

260 **Discussion**

261 This study adds to a body of literature that has demonstrated retinal microvascular changes after  
262 episcleral plaque brachytherapy (EPB). Specifically, our study demonstrated a significant  
263 decrease in capillary density in EPB treated eyes earlier than previously reported and prior to  
264 clinically evident radiation retinopathy. It also demonstrated progressive decreases in density at  
265 intervals over a 2-year period. This was accomplished through the use of quantitative metrics  
266 that directly reflect microvascular density such as vessel skeleton density (VSD), and also  
267 indirectly such as flow impairment region (FIR). Significant changes in vessel diameter index  
268 (VDI) were also seen over this time period. In addition to these findings, we present a case with  
269 a large gradient (>165 Gy) of high-dose radiation across the fovea that appears to be spatially  
270 correlated to microvascular density. Collectively, these data suggest that capillary changes are  
271 occurring before clinically evident retinopathy, and that the magnitude of the radiation dose may  
272 correlate with the magnitude of the capillary damage in any given region. Furthermore, they  
273 highlight the potential utility of OCTA to monitor the progression of subtle changes in  
274 microvasculature over a period of months in treated eyes.

275  
276 Our findings were consistent with those in prior studies that used OCTA to assess parafoveal  
277 vessel density in irradiated eyes. Say et al. and Cennamo et al quantified total vascular area using  
278 3x3mm and 6x6mm binarized en-face images, respectively.(14, 15) Both demonstrated  
279 significant reduction in vessel area density in irradiated eyes compared to fellow eyes. Although  
280 the capillary densities in these previous studies were estimated as vessel area density, our  
281 preferred method for estimating capillary density is the skeletonized density (VSD). This is  
282 because VSD is not influenced by capillary morphologic changes such as vessel diameter, which

283 may accompany vasculopathies, and is also minimally impacted by large caliber vessels. For  
284 brevity, our study only reports the VSD analysis as the measure for capillary density. Vessel  
285 diameter was approximated as an index -VDI - which we also demonstrate changes with  
286 worsening retinopathy . FIR, our third metric, complements VSD as an indirect measure of  
287 density and a direct measure of subclinical impaired perfusion. As FIR only accounts for  
288 avascular areas above a set threshold, it theoretically has a higher specificity (but lower  
289 sensitivity) for capillary dropout. For example, the loss of very minute areas of capillary flow  
290 may not result in an avascular area above our set threshold, and therefore would have no effect  
291 on FIR, but a definite effect on VSD.

292

293 The findings of our study highlight the potential use of OCTA for monitoring vascular changes  
294 in irradiated eyes over time. The vascular metrics can also serve as adjuncts to help grade the  
295 severity of radiation retinopathy. Several groups have aimed to develop effective grading  
296 schemes that use various imaging modalities, including ultra-wide field fluorescein  
297 angiography.(9) In 2005, Finger et al developed a system with four stages of severity that  
298 correlated with vision loss, based on a combination of findings from dye-based angiography and  
299 ophthalmoscopy.(8) Horgan et al later described in 2008 how OCT could be further added to  
300 identify macular edema, an early clinical feature of radiation retinopathy.(7) More recently,  
301 Veverka et al. suggested OCTA could also be used to help grade severity, demonstrating that it  
302 may detect RR prior to changes seen on OCT alone.(28)

303

304 Thus, we concur with the assertion that OCTA may be a powerful tool in determining the  
305 severity of radiation retinopathy, and also in detecting very early microvascular changes before

306 the onset of retinopathy on exam. This has a wide variety of clinical applications. For example,  
307 OCTA can contribute relevant information for individualizing the time point for RR treatment  
308 intervention, and also provide sensitive biomarkers for comparing the efficacy of RR treatment  
309 regimens.(29-31) The use of various metrics as demonstrated in this study may noticeably  
310 increase the sensitivity of OCTA to capture early changes in RR, as subtle changes in density  
311 and vessel diameter are often challenging to appreciate qualitatively in the clinic setting. For  
312 clinical purposes, we suggest obtaining 3x3mm OCT angiograms in both eyes prior to EPB  
313 placement, and intermittently at follow-up visits for those with access to these devices. As our  
314 study has shown, significant microvascular changes can be seen within 6 months of treatment,  
315 suggesting repeat imaging may be prudent at early post-operative dates. Furthermore, as our  
316 understanding of the utility of OCTA continues to grow, longitudinal scans may prove useful in  
317 the long-term management of individuals with RR including indications for therapy.

318

319 Our exploration of a possible spatial correlation between radiation dose and capillary density was  
320 demonstrated in Case 1 (Figure 4) which had (by chance alone) a very steep gradient change for  
321 the radiation dose over the 3x3mm area of the macula which was imaged. Of note, Case 4 also  
322 showed a large area of ischemia nearest the high dose radiation in a wider 6x6mm window. The  
323 significantly lower resolution of 6x6mm OCTA scans precludes a detailed analysis of density  
324 changes in these scans. Our findings provide a basis for future studies assessing the within eye  
325 spatial relation between EPB dosimetry and microvasculature abnormalities to enhance the  
326 understanding of radiation dose on the retinal vasculature and the development of radiation  
327 retinopathy.

328 Some potential limitations of our study include those inherent to OCTA imaging, such as motion  
329 artifacts and floaters, which can interfere with efforts to accurately quantify vascular metrics. We  
330 aimed to control for this by excluding images with significant artifacts. Additionally, this study  
331 analyzed images from the 3x3mm OCTA scan pattern and may have missed some peripheral  
332 defects associated with EPB. However, larger scan patterns available at the time of this study  
333 did not have sufficient resolution to reliably detect capillary level changes, so use of the high  
334 resolution 3x3mm field was necessary. Future studies may consider images from 6x6mm or even  
335 larger windows if the resolution of the scans is sufficient. Furthermore, future studies may aim to  
336 generate dosimetry maps in a larger number of eyes, and employ more quantitative approaches to  
337 better evaluate the spatial relationship between EPB dosimetry and microvascular aberrations.  
338 Other limitations are from the retrospective nature of the data analyzed. For example, the images  
339 for the study were acquired during study visits which were determined on a case to case basis by  
340 the physician. Although we addressed the difference in the time intervals by binning, our  
341 findings can be refined by using a regularized and standardized time intervals across subjects.

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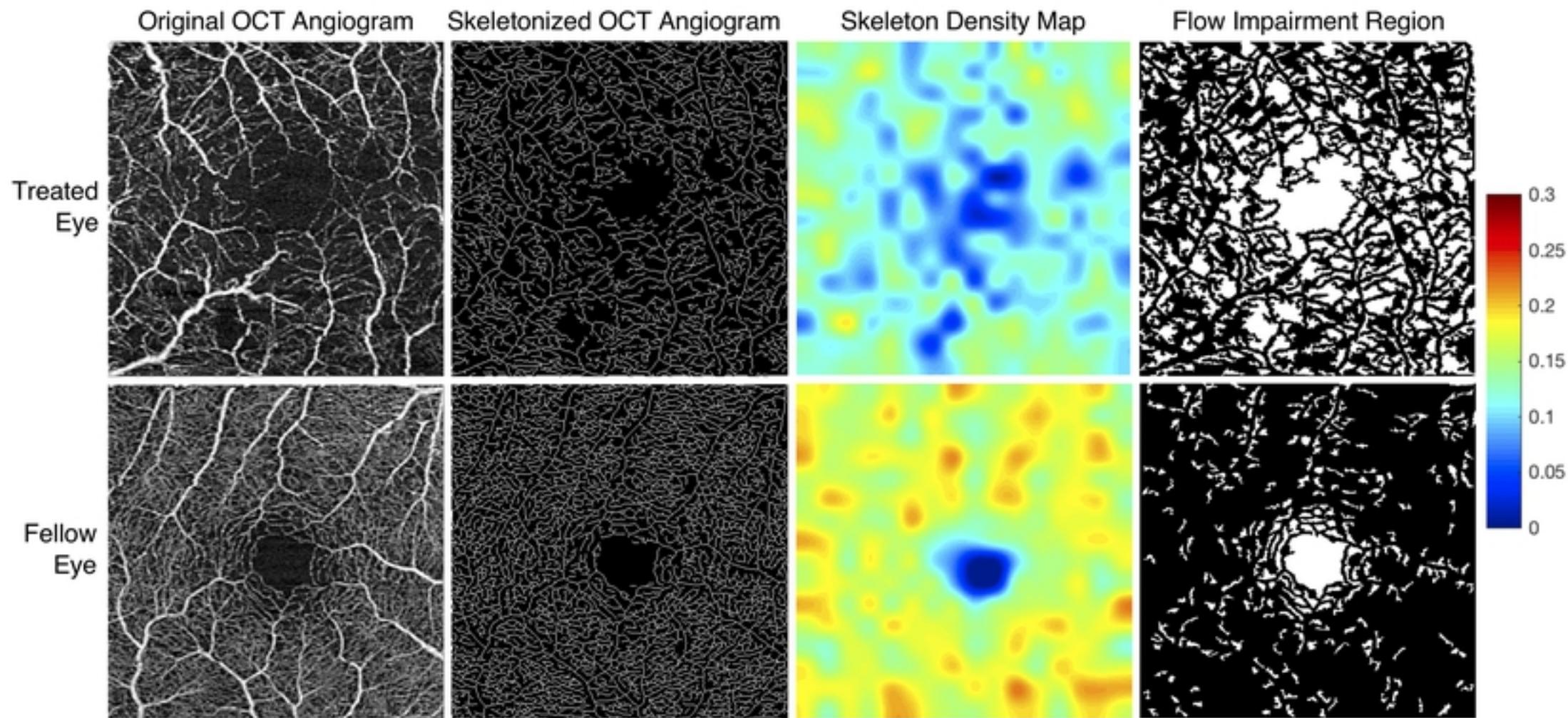
343 In conclusion, we investigated OCTA changes associated with EPB treatment of choroidal  
344 melanoma and report significant changes in OCTA metrics at about 6 months or earlier, even  
345 when there were no clinically detectable signs of radiation retinopathy. The change in the OCTA  
346 metrics increased over time, and in a dose dependent manner. We infer that OCTA can be a  
347 viable tool for monitoring the effect of EPB on the retinal microvasculature and its findings may  
348 play a pivotal role in developing intervention modalities to delay or treat the occurrences of  
349 retinopathy after episcleral plaque brachytherapy.

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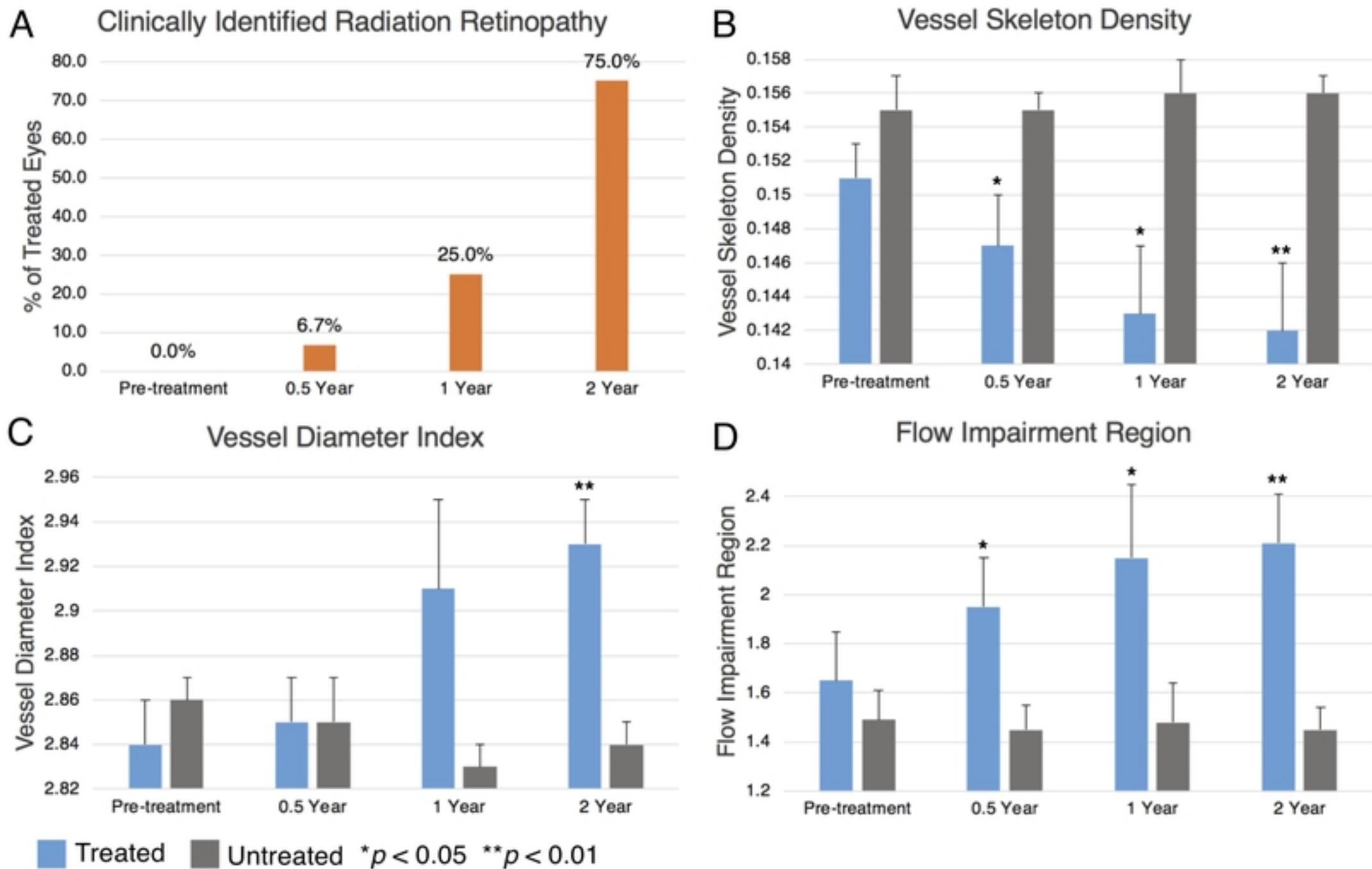
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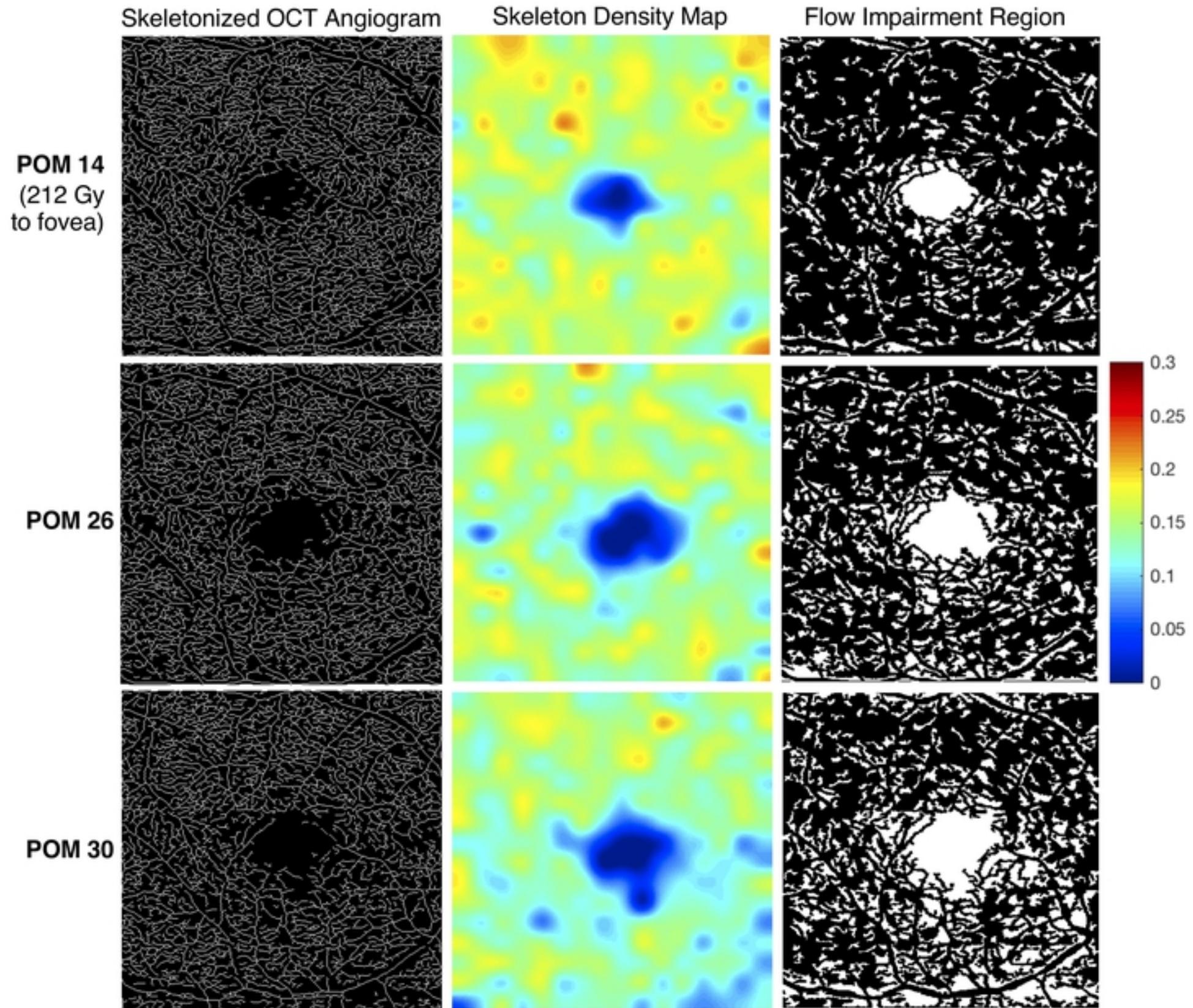
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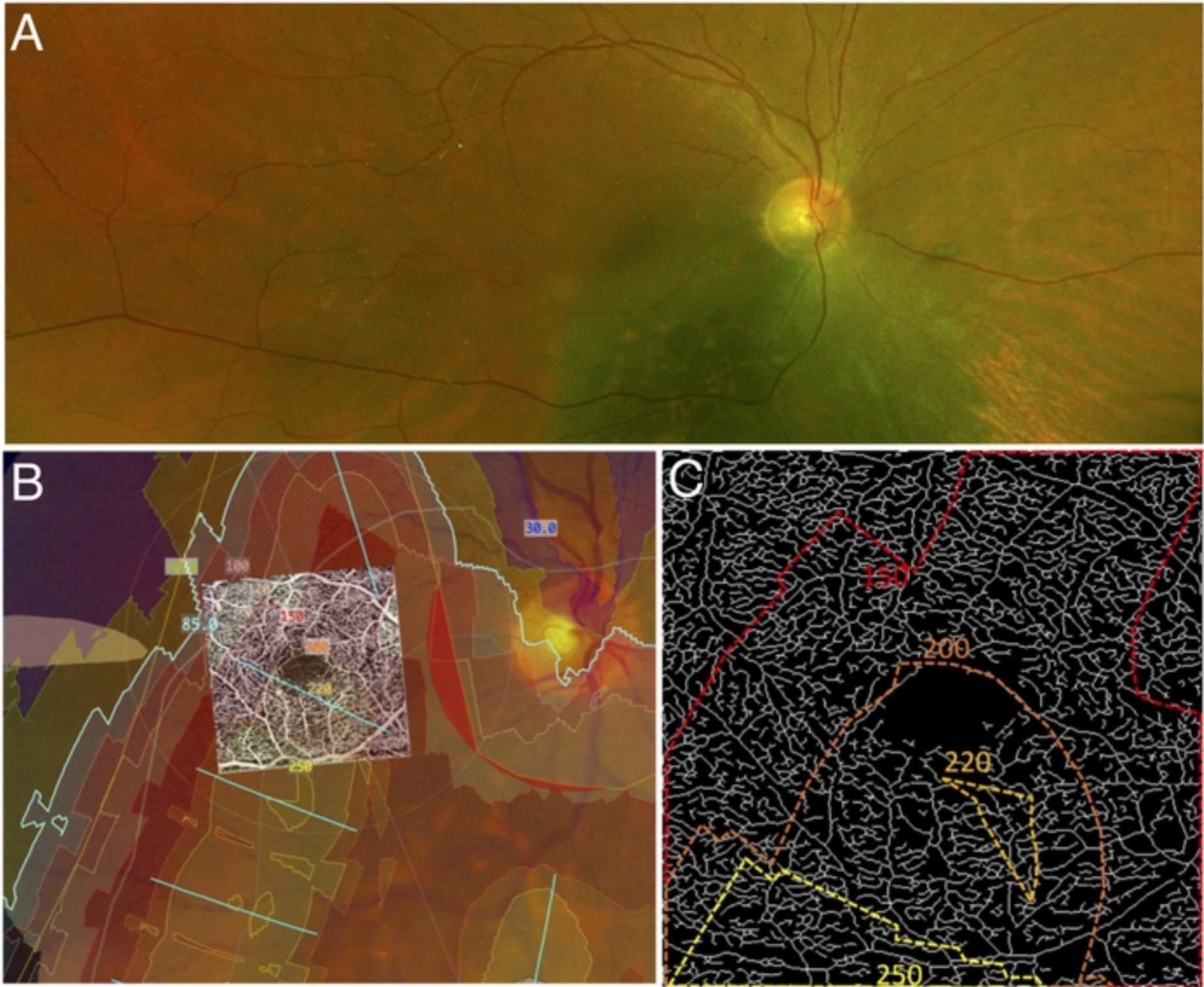
**Figure 1. Processed OCT angiograms from treated and fellow eyes of a single patient.**



**Figure 2. Longitudinal clinical and quantitative OCTA data.**



**Figure 3. Longitudinal skeleton density and flow impairment maps of a treated eye.**



**Figure 4. Spatial correlation of parafoveal microvascular changes with radiation dose.**