Enucleation vs. Intraocular Prosthesis

Loss of a pet's eye is generally more traumatic for the owner than it is for the pet.

Several diseases cause blind, painful eyes and in those cases we generally recommend removal of the eye. I have had few conversations with owners that have not ended in tears when this topic comes up. The good news is that most dogs and cats do very well, and within a few days many owners find their pets to be more playful and energetic because we have eliminated the cause of chronic pain.

Enucleation is removal of the eye and sewing up of the lid margins to have a flat space where the eye previously was. When I graduated from vet school, I thought that enucleation was the only necessary surgery because removing the eye removes the source of pain in most cases. What I underestimated is the preference for humans to have two eyes to look at.

Even if one does not work, we are a species that interacts with our eyes.

Even if the pet doesn't care, sometimes the owners do.

Intraocular prosthesis implantation does not result in a functional eye. But it does result in a cosmetic repair, keeping the shell of the eye (the sclera and cornea) in place. The problem with this technique is that the aftercare is more involved. Throughout the pet's life, the eye still has superficial sensitivity and the remaining cornea can be scratched or damaged. In addition, up to 1 out of 4 pets develop dry eye. This may require long term medication for comfort. Some patients have post operative complications that require a follow up enucleation, although that situation is not common.

Making the decision for your pet is a personal one. In the case of glaucoma, the cause of the pressure is gone and your pet will be comfortable either way. Which procedure to be done is
less important than that a procedure is done. In either case, your pet will only likely stay for the
day and go home the same evening. Either way your pet will go home with pain medication and
an antibiotic. Either way, your pet will be given a local anesthetic block of the area.

Its important to remember that the goal is a comfortable patient. Enucleation or
Intrascleral prosthesis will provide this for your pet.

These are pictures from the internet of dogs that had enucleation

Enucleation of two eyes...this is Sweetie, who had a great life for years after her
enucleation
Right eye in a Irish setter 3 weeks after surgery

Left eye in a chihuahua 3 months after surgery

Right eye intrascleral prosthesis

Mark J Hanks DVM
Karen Pooler DVM

857 River Road  Orrington, ME 04474  (207) 825-8989  www.kindredvet.com