Purpose: To evaluate the clinical course and visual prognosis of elderly patients over 75 years of age who underwent pars plana vitrectomy (PPV) and peeling of idiopathic epiretinal membranes (ERM).

Methods: 29 eyes of 29 patients 75 years and older who underwent PPV and ERM peeling were included in this retrospective study. Patients with additional ocular vision-limiting conditions other than cataract were excluded. Recorded parameters included demographic information, preoperative visual acuity (VA), pre- and post-operative OCT findings including macular thickness and presence of cystoids macular edema (CME), details of surgery, length of follow-up, post-operative complications, recurrence of ERM and final VA.

Results: Mean patient age was 79.6 years, the highest in published literature. Mean change in VA was 0.23 logMAR units, and 65.5% patients gained 2 or more lines of vision. No parameter correlated significantly with final VA. The subgroup of patients 80 years or older had lower initial and final VA, but had a greater mean gain in VA than patients between 75-79 years.

Conclusions: PPV with ERM peeling is safe and effective in restoring VA in elderly patients, and the results are comparable to those previously reported for younger patients with idiopathic ERM. In patients 80 years or older the initial and final VA was lower, but the visual gain was greater, than in younger patients. Old age should not hinder surgery in patients with idiopathic ERM who seek to improve their vision and quality of life.