Sonography as a replacement for sialography for the diagnosis of salivary glands affected by Sjögren’s syndrome

Recently, it has been suggested that sono-

graphic evaluation of the salivary glands is useful in the diagnosis of Sjögren’s syndrome. Kawamura et al and, more recently, Ariji et al, showed that descriptive and quantitative assessment of the salivary glands by sonogra-

phy efficiently differentiated between dis-

eased and normal glands in patients with Sjö-

gren’s syndrome. et al They showed that the proposed sonographic gradings correlated well with the sialographic gradings. These findings suggest that sonography might be an alternative diagnostic tool for Sjögren’s syn-

drome.

Here, we attempted to determine whether sonography can take the place of sialography as an alternative technique for the assessment of salivary gland involvement in Sjögren’s syndrome. Sialography and sonography were performed on 294 patients who presented with sicca syndrome (171 positive and 123 negative for Sjögren’s syndrome). We diag-

nosed patients with Sjögren’s syndrome on the basis of the criteria of the European Com-

munity Study Group. Sonographic features characteristic of Sjögren’s syndrome are heterogeneous echogenicity with hypo- and hyperechoic signals throughout the affected gland (fig 1).

Table 1 shows the performance of each of the diagnostic criteria. Sialography performed best among the five diagnostic criteria—that is, sialography, functional tests (Saxon and Schirmer), and serological tests (SS-A and SS-B). Interestingly, when used instead of sialography, sonography provided a good per-

formance, comparable with that of sialogra-

phy (McNemar test, p=0.067). In contrast, the other diagnostic criteria did not perform as well as the two imaging criteria.

In conclusion, a diagnosis of Sjögren’s syn-

drome can be made on the basis of a wide range of diagnostic tests, and not merely on fixed combinations of these tests. Evaluation of salivary gland involvement contributes signifi-

antly to the performance of the criteria. Thus the availability of different imaging techniques, such as Doppler sonography and magnetic resonance imaging, to assess sali-

vary gland involvement allows clinicians to classify patients with sicca syndrome cor-

rectly.
Radiographs of the hands and feet were normal. There were slight erosions of the sacroiliac joints and of the symphysis pubis.

The patient was treated with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and on several occasions with local injections of corticosteroids into the knee joints. For the psoriatic nails he took actretine (Neotigason) at a daily dose of 20 mg, for 12 months, but the nail lesions did not improve. In view of the persistence of the psoriasis, he was treated since January 2000 with sulfasalazine (the dose being progressively increased from 0.5 g daily to 2 g daily), in addition to NSAIDs. Three months later, the nail lesions started to recede and they disappeared progressively (fig 1B); the improvement has persisted until now. Concomitantly, there was a marked improvement of the arthritis.

Discussion

Nail disease is significantly associated with PsA. It is particularly common in cases with DIP joint involvement and tends to indicate more severe PsA. In view of the close chronological relationship between the administration of sulfasalazine and the improvement of the nail lesions, it can be considered that sulfasalazine played a beneficial part in the pathological condition of our patient. Dermatological assessment of patients treated with sulfasalazine for PsA has been reported in two series; according to the report published in the series of Gupta et al, patients treated with sulfasalazine for PsA showed signs of cutaneous improvement compared with those receiving placebo.1 The series of Farr et al reports improved cutaneous lesions in as few as 3/15 patients receiving sulfasalazine for PsA.2

Sulfasalazine played a beneficial part in the nail lesions, it can be considered that sulfasalazine for PsA showed signs of cutaneous improvement compared with those receiving placebo.1 The series of Farr et al reports improved cutaneous lesions in as few as 3/15 patients treated with sulfasalazine and 1/15 patients receiving placebo. However, we could not find any indication of the evolution of possible simultaneous psoriatic nail lesions.

Treatment of PsA with cyclosporin or etanercept is effective for both joint and skin lesions of psoriasis;3 again no data about the outcome of psoriatic nail lesions were provided in these clinical studies. Our case report might be the occasion to draw the attention of rheumatologists to the possible beneficial effects of basic treatment such as sulfasalazine not only for PsA but also for treating psoriatic nails.

**References**

6 Steinsson K, Jonsdottir I, Valdimarsson H. Cyclosporin A in psoriatic arthritis: an open home sequential high dose IV immunoglobulin treatments and to enable patients to remain at home that we have developed the administration of IV immunoglobulins at home when sequential treatments are necessary.

Between January 1995 and March 2000 30 patients (18 women, 12 men) were enrolled, with a mean (SD) age of 44 (0.9) for the women and 51 (0.9) years for the men (range 21–74). All the patients had received the first two treatments in hospital to ascertain their tolerance. Patients mostly received Tégelepin (314 treatments), Endobuline (81 treatments), and Gammagard (three treatments). All the patients had a corticosteroid or refractory autoimmune disease (mostly polyarthritis, dermatomyositis, and adult onset Still's disease).

The doses prescribed for each treatment were generally 2 g/kg. Treatments were carried out monthly and consisted of two days when performed in hospital and five days when performed at home. The average flow rate of the IV immunoglobulin perfusions performed at home was 10 g/2 h (extreme values: 30 min–4 h). The secondary effects of the treatments at home remained conventional and minor.

The efficacy of the IV immunoglobulin was described by the patients as very good in 17% (highly), good in 33%, modest in 47%, nil in 17%. The efficacy of the IV immunoglobulin was described by the senior doctor as very good in 33%, good 30%, nil in 17%. Evaluation of the efficacy described by the patients themselves was based on purely functional criteria (general condition, pain, mobility, etc.).

**Home sequential high dose intravenous immunoglobulins in systemic autoimmune disease**

The high cost of IV immunoglobulins is often considered to be a disadvantage of this treatment. However, this does not take into account the benefits gained—for example, the savings achieved in the costs of corticosteroids and immunosuppressive drugs and, above all, the improvement in quality of life achieved through functional improvement, as noticed in inflammatory myopathies and Still's disease.4 It is precisely to minimise the costs of IV immunoglobulin treatments and to enable patients to remain at home that we have developed the administration of IV immunoglobulins at home when sequential treatments are necessary.

Between January 1995 and March 2000 30 patients (18 women, 12 men) were enrolled, with a mean (SD) age of 44 (0.9) for the women and 51 (0.9) years for the men (range 21–74). All the patients had received the first two treatments in hospital to ascertain their tolerance. Patients mostly received Tégelepin (314 treatments), Endobuline (81 treatments), and Gammagard (three treatments). All the patients had a corticosteroid or refractory autoimmune disease (mostly polyarthritis, dermatomyositis, and adult onset Still's disease).

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**References**

invoiced by the hospital administration for $63,691 with $85,377 of budget revenues for five years, the savings for the community amount to $2,701 against $2,471 for a treatment at home. The difference seems to be modest, yet for the community it is invoiced 15% higher, the difference being paid to the hospital administration to cover management and traceability costs.

The mean cost of a treatment in hospital was $7,482.74 against $6,845.88 for a treatment at home, the savings for the community amounting to $85,377 (representing the effective savings for the community) and $580,556 (representing the virtual economy made by the hospital department and small equipment) in the past five years (table 1). In the light of our experience and published reports of side effects, we propose some guidelines for home IV immunoglobulin infusion for patients with autoimmune disease (table 2). This procedure is appreciated by the patients and medical board and contributes to balancing the expenses for the National Health System.

**Acknowledgments**
To Monique Tomczak who typed this document; Thomas Rémy, Bernard Dauvergne, and Mazen Almoznino-Sarafian D, Zeltser D, et al. Correspondence to: Professor E Hachulla, Internal Medicine Department, Hôpital Claude Huriez, University of Lille, 59037 Lille cedex, France; e.hachulla@chu-lille.fr

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Evaluation of the cost of at home IV immunoglobulin treatments (n=277) and comparison with the theoretical cost in hospital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean costs for one treatment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV immunoglobulin</td>
<td>24 h hospital stay with small equipment, nursing, and lump sum costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical cost in hospital</td>
<td>$9255 (deduction on drug budget)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective cost at home</td>
<td>$2,2363 (15% of retrocession overcost*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost for one treatment in hospital</td>
<td>$2,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost for one treatment at home</td>
<td>$2,471</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In France when a drug is retroceded by a hospital pharmacy, it is invoiced 15% higher, the difference being paid to the hospital administration to cover the management and traceability costs.

**Table 2** Home IV immunoglobulin infusion guidelines for patients with autoimmune disease

1. Need for a defined diagnosis
2. Presence of rational physiopathological basis that could “legitimise” the use of IV immunoglobulin
3. Senior hospital prescription
4. Respect of the contraindication of home IV immunoglobulin programme: coronaryopathy, insufficiency or ischaemic cardiopathy, recent stroke, nephropathy, uncontrolled hypertension, thrombosis of the perfused vein, hypersensibility reaction after the first or second hospital infusion
5. More than one hospital based infusion before infusion at home to assess the tolerance
6. Average flow rate of IV immunoglobulin no quicker than 10 g per two hours
7. Collaboration with a home care organisation for visiting nurses and for collection of tubing and used bottles

**References**

**Elastofibroma dorsi**
Elastofibroma is a rarely diagnosed benign fibrolipomatous lesion which occurs most commonly in the periscapular region of middle aged to elderly women. Recognition of the lesion is important as the differential diagnosis includes other benign and also...
malignant tumours. We report a case of elastofibroma in a patient who presented with shoulder pain to a rheumatology clinic, and review previous publications. Although elastofibroma is uncommon, it has received attention in radiological and orthopaedic publications but not in rheumatology published reports.

A 43 year old Turkish woman, previously fit and healthy, was referred to our outpatient clinic with a two year history of right shoulder pain. The pain was described as a dull ache of gradual onset, around the posterior aspect of the shoulder over the scapula, which would appear and disappear with movement of the arm. The patient had no other medical history or relevant family history.

On examination there was a full range of movement of both shoulders and neck with no wasting or neurological signs. Pain was reproduced around the right shoulder when the arm was circumducted. In this position a mobile mass of 5 cm in size was reproduced around the right shoulder where the shoulder moves. Th e mass was causing pain. Postoperative histology confirmed an elastofibroma. The patient has remained asymptomatic after surgery with no recurrence of the mass. Elastofibroma, first described in 1961, is a benign, slow growing, mesenchymal soft tissue lesion. They usually occur in active subjects above the age of 50 with a male:female ratio of 1.5. Most (99%) occur in the subscapular region, usually on the right side. The lesions have occasionally been found in the extremities, head, abdominal and thoracic cavities. Of those in the subscapular region approximately 10% are bilateral. The cause and pathogenesis are unclear, but it is suspected that subclinical microtrauma may lead to reactive hyperplasia of elastic fibres with consequently increased production of fibrous tissue. Clinically, over 50% of subjects are asymptomatic and may present with a painless swelling; approximately 25% present with a clicking sensation when the arm is moved, while fewer than 10% present with pain.

Plain radiographs may be normal or may show soft tissue density in the periscapular region when the scapula is raised. Computed tomography usually shows a heterogeneous soft tissue mass with poorly defined margins. MRI is the best non-invasive technique and most useful for diagnosis. Elastofibromas appear as poorly circumscribed soft tissue lesions with similar signal intensity to that of skeletal muscle but interspersed with high signal intensity areas representing adipose tissue. The differential diagnosis includes desmoid tumours, neurofibroma, and liposarcoma. However, these tumours usually show strong enhancement after gadolinium injection. Usually faint enhancement is seen with elastofibromas, although marked enhancement, mimicking malignant tumour, has been occasionally reported. Biopsy should therefore be undertaken as the confirmatory procedure and to exclude sarcoma.

In cases where the patient is asymptomatic excision is unnecessary. Malignant transformation is unknown. In symptomatic cases local excision is the best treatment. Recurrence has not been reported.

We conclude that elastofibroma should be considered in the differential diagnosis of subscapular pain. Although an uncommon lesion with a variable clinical presentation, the site and MRI appearances are characteristic. Awareness of the benign nature avoids unnecessary surgery and reassures a symptomatic patient.

References


Olecranon bursitis due to Candida parapsilosis in an immunocompetent adult

Septic bursitis (SB) mainly affects the olecranon and patellar bursa. Subcutaneous localisation predisposes to trauma and may subsequently lead to infection. Most cases of SB are related to the subject’s occupation (roofing, gardening, plumbing), but surgical interventions (aspiration, intraarticular injection) are among other probable causes. Bacteria account for most cases, Staphylococcus aureus being the most commonly found (80%). Fungal isolation is quite rare and always associated with immunosuppression or debilitating conditions, but some species of Candida, Cryptococcus, Penicillium, and Spathularia schenkii have been described. These atypical organisms usually develop in a late indolent pattern, and a delay in diagnosis and treatment may lead to considerable difficulties in eradication of infection. We report a case of SB caused by Candida parapsilosis in a previously healthy man, with no underlying disease or any risk factors, including HIV infection, who probably acquired joint infection at the hospital secondary to local steroid injection.

Case report

A 32 year old man with a one month history of mild inflammation of the right elbow presented to our hospital on 19 May 2000. He had...
an unremarkable past medical history, which did not include any toxic habits or recent trauma. Bursal aspiration showed that the synovial fluid had inflammatory characteristics (leucocyte count 4.9×10³ cells/l (54% neutrophils), and a glucose level of 3.8 mmol/l), but there were no crystals and a fluid culture was negative. A diagnosis of olecranon bursitis was established, and conservative management (bursa aspiration and steroid injection) was decided on. Bursal effusion was repeated over the next four days, so a further aspiration was carried out and local injection with triamcinolone acetate (20 mg) was given. However 24 days later the pain was recurring and swelling of the elbow recurved, laboratory synovial findings showed a leucocyte count of 15.7×10³ cells/l (60% neutrophils) and a low glucose level (0.8 mmol/l). Culture yielded a few colonies of Candida spp., but antifungal treatment was not started because it was considered that this might be caused by contamination. One month later (28 July), the patient presented to the emergency room owing to development of a new extremely painful episode of bursitis. After joint aspiration, a steroid injection was again given, but this time a fluid culture was not carried out.

On 1 August clinical symptoms persisted. Physical examination showed an increase in swelling of the olecranon bursa. The patient had never presented with fever, arthralgias, or physical activities. Local trauma may predispose micro-organisms to penetrate by the transcutaneous route.1 Similarly, intrabursal steroid injection, a habitual therapeutic procedure to caterisations2-5 or intra-articular injections.6 It is not strongly associated with immunocompromised hosts, but rather with invasive procedures or prosthetic devices.7 More recently C parapsilosis has emerged as an important nosocomial pathogen. This is the Candida species that is most commonly isolated from the hands of healthcare workers.8 In contrast with other Candida species, colonisation with C parapsilosis rarely occurs before the onset of invasive infection, and also by direct inoculation secondarily.9 C parapsilosis is a well known cause of arthritis that has been described secondary to systemic dissemination in intravenous drug users,10 and also by direct inoculation secondary to catheterisations11 or intra-articular injections.9 It is not strongly associated with immunocompromised hosts, but rather with invasive procedures or prosthetic devices.7

Table 1 Main clinical features of candida bursitis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case [ref]</th>
<th>Age/sex</th>
<th>Candida strains</th>
<th>Localisation</th>
<th>Underlying disease/ risk factors</th>
<th>Probable source</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 [3]</td>
<td>73/M</td>
<td>C albicans</td>
<td>Subacromial</td>
<td>SLE/steroids</td>
<td>Candidaemia</td>
<td>AMB</td>
<td>Cure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 [5]</td>
<td>77/M</td>
<td>C tropicalis</td>
<td>Olecranon</td>
<td>Bladder carcinoma</td>
<td>Candidaemia</td>
<td>AMB + bursectomy</td>
<td>Cure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 [6]</td>
<td>48/M</td>
<td>C tropicalis</td>
<td>Popliteal</td>
<td>Lympoma/ inflammatory suppurative drugs</td>
<td>Candidaemia</td>
<td>AMB + surgery</td>
<td>Cure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 [7]</td>
<td>64/M</td>
<td>C albicans</td>
<td>Popliteal</td>
<td>Alcoholism/steroids, antibiotics</td>
<td>Candidaemia</td>
<td>AMB, ketoconazole</td>
<td>Cure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 [8]</td>
<td>59/F</td>
<td>C lusitaniae</td>
<td>Olecranon</td>
<td>SLE, diabetes, asthma/ steroids, inflammatory suppurative drugs</td>
<td>Candidaemia</td>
<td>Superficial trauma</td>
<td>Fluconazole, 5-FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 [CR]</td>
<td>32/M</td>
<td>C parapsilosis</td>
<td>Olecranon</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Streptococcal infection</td>
<td>Fluconazole + bursectomy</td>
<td>Cure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CR, current report; AMB, amphotericin B; SLE, systemic lupus erythematosus; 5-FC, 5-fluorocytosine.

References


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Prevalence of allergic respiratory diseases in patients with RA

The balance between Th1 and Th2 cell activity is important in many autoimmune disorders. It has been suggested that rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a Th1 cell characterized by a low Th2 activity. Some recent observations\(^1\) of a deficiency of atopy in patients with RA have received a lot of attention. It has been suggested that a T2 cell related disorder such as atopy might have a protective role against the onset of a Th1 mediated disease such as RA, the biological importance of the Th1/Th2 paradigm has been emphasized.

We evaluated the prevalence of atopic respiratory diseases in 126 consecutively observed adult patients (84 females, 42 males) with RA. The diagnosis of RA was made according to the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) criteria. The presence of allergic respiratory diseases was investigated in all patients by an exhaustive interview and the administration of skin prick tests according to the EAACI guidelines. Skin prick tests were made according to the EAACI guidelines, with a panel including the most common airborne allergens of our area. The positivity of skin prick tests. Seven of 21 patients also had symptoms of asthma and 3/21 had undergone specific immunotherapy against the most common airborne allergens of our area. A diagnosis of allergic rhinitis was made in 21 patients (16.6%).

We found a rather high prevalence of atopy in our patients with RA (43/42 = 56.8%) which is comparable with that expected in the general population.\(^7\) Moreover, the presence of atopic disease did not seem to influence the severity of RA.

In conclusion, our data question the hypothesis of a mutual antagonism of RA and atopy, suggesting caution in interpreting previous data and confirming that things are often not as simple as they can seem at first glance.

References


Henoch–Schönlein purpura: a possible complication of hepatitis C related liver cirrhosis

Henoch–Schönlein purpura (HSP) is a systemic small vessel vasculitis predominantly affecting children and, less commonly, adults. Classical HSP includes a tetrad of palpable purpura, arthritis, abdominal pain, and nephropathy and is present with any two of the four criteria in the tetrad (87% sensitivity and specificity). Gastrointestinal disease has been recorded in up to 82% of adult patients in one series\(^7\) and is usually self-limiting with colicky abdominal pain, but may progress to ischaemic bowel perforation.\(^6\)

We present the case of a 63 year old man with IgA vasculitis, probably HSP confounded by undiagnosed hepatitis C related liver cirrhosis.

He was admitted with a two week history of dyspepsia, malaise, cough, fevers, and chills, myalgias, one day of a non-blanching erythematous rash on his legs, and an ileus. His hepatitis C antibody was positive; table 1 shows the results of other laboratory studies, cultures of cerebrospinal fluid, blood, and urine were negative. A colonscopy was non-diagnostic.

Leucocytoclastic vasculitis was confirmed by skin biopsy, and direct immunofluorescence staining was positive for IgA deposits consistent with HSP (fig 1).

Treatment with high dose (1 mg/kg/day) intravenous corticosteroids was started. A complete remission was achieved. Liver biopsy showed portal hypertensive, a small cirrhotic liver, small spleen, omental and perisplenic varices, an atrophic pancreas, and modest ascites. The purpuric lesions and ileus improved; however, on day 4 he became tachycardic and developed a tender abdomen.

A second CT scan showed massive ascites, a partial superior mesenteric vein thrombosis, thickening, and focal and nodular irregularities throughout the small bowel (probable ischaemia), and pneumoperitoneum. Blood cultures disclosed septicemia with *Bacteroides fragilis*. His clinical course rapidly deteriorated and he died on day 8.

There are two previous case reports of the association between HSP and hepatitis C.\(^1\) The diagnosis of HSP in our patient is most likely, given palpable purpura, haematuria, abdominal pain, and a skin biopsy demonstrating IgA complexes (fig 1). However, the possibility of hepatitis C associated IgA/mG mixed cryoglobulinaemia cannot be ruled out despite a negative cryoglobulin screen on two occasions. In this patient an IgA mediated vasculitis may have been the nidus for thrombus formation and abdominal catastrophe.

The role of liver cirrhosis in the development of HSP is intriguing. Patients with cirrhosis may develop HSP as a consequence of defective liver metabolism of IgA circulating immune complexes (CICs), resulting in tissue deposition, although this is known to occur without overt vasculitis.\(^4\) Adult and paediatric HSP differ in the incidence and severity of renal involvement, with nephropathy and progression to renal insufficiency being more frequent in adult HSP\(^7\) which is associated with a poor outcome.\(^7\) Gastrointestinal manifestations vary widely and include abdominal pain, nausea/vomiting, intestinal haemorrhage and, rarely, perforation.

There have been no large clinical trials in adults with complicated HSP. Corticosteroids used in a series of children have been shown to relieve symptoms,\(^8\) but fail to deal prospectively with the prevention of abdominal complications. Adults respond favourably to corticosteroids and may be managed with short courses of treatment,\(^8\) but corticosteroids may also mask severe abdominal catastrophe.

Several important points can be learnt from this case report:

- Although nephritis is the most important long term prognostic factor in HSP in the short term, gastrointestinal disease can lead to death despite early therapeutic intervention.
- Liver cirrhosis secondary to hepatitis C may precipitate development of HSP or mixed cryoglobulinaemic vasculitis through the defective metabolism of CICs.
- Given the increasing incidence of hepatitis C related liver disease world wide, the association of these diagnoses and their clinical implications should be considered more often.

Acknowledgments

We thank Drs Karen Stout, Brett Sheppard, Amy Howard, and Sandhya Venugopal for their participation in, and discussions about, this case.

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Figure 1 Immunofluorescence staining of a skin biopsy from a purpuric lesion. Direct immunofluorescence study showing granular deposition of IgA in the walls of superficial dermal blood vessels, a characteristic finding in Henoch-Schönlein purpura.

Table 1 Significant laboratory values on the day of admission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Patient's values</th>
<th>Normal values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haemoglobin (g/l)</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>135–175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White blood cell count (&lt;10³/µl)</td>
<td>14000</td>
<td>3.4–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platelet count (&lt;10⁹/µl)</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>0.15–420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complement C3 (mg/ml)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>880–2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complement C4 (mg/ml)</td>
<td>&lt;100</td>
<td>160–470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serum creatinine (µmol/l)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>70–110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alkaline phosphatase (U/l)</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>35–105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspartate aminotransferase (U/l)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11–32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alanine aminotransferase (U/l)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5–30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lactate dehydrogenase (U/l)</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>110–205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total bilirubin (µmol/l)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albumin (g/l)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36–52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urine analysis (RBC/HPF)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANA titre</td>
<td>1/40</td>
<td>&lt;1/40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RBC/HPF, red blood cells/high power field; ANA, antinuclear antibody.

Severe aortic regurgitation in RF positive polyarticular JIA

An 18 year old girl of Moroccan origin with a clear medical history was transferred to the Netherlands in February 1989 because of a two year history of untreated polyarthritis. The disease had pursued a rapidly destructive course, resulting in contractures and ankylosis of the spine, hips, knees, shoulders, and elbows and small joint deformation. A diagnosis of juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) polyarticular type, functional class IV was made. No nodules were present. Laboratory analysis at that time showed borderline positive serum rheumatoid factor (RF) 30 IE/ml. Tests for antinuclear antibodies and HLA-B27 were negative. Treatment was started with intensive physiotherapy and intramuscular gold, the latter being replaced by sulfasalazine because of proteinuria. In 1990 she was treated for a unilateral uveitis. In 1992 her right elbow was replaced. Until 1993 cardiac examination showed no murmurs and chest roentgenogram was normal.

In November 1995 she was admitted to our clinic because of respiratory distress and increasingly frequent attacks of angina pectoris. Her heart rate was 84 beats/min with a blood pressure of 160/0 mm Hg. A grade 3/6 systolic ejection murmur that radiated into the ascending aorta was heard over the cardiac apex as well as a grade 3/6 harsh diastolic decrescendo murmur over the left sternal border. A pericardial friction rub was not present. Examination of the carotid arteries disclosed a murmur and palpable thrill on both sides. An electrocardiogram showed left ventricular hypertrophy and the chest radiograph slight cardiomegaly. An echocardiogram demonstrated left ventricular dilatation (65 mm; normally <55 mm) and an abnormally thickened aortic valve. Colour Doppler echocardiography showed severe aortic regurgitation, a pressure gradient over the aortic valve (maximum pressure gradient 38 mm Hg, mean gradient 24 mm Hg), and diastolic back flow in the abdominal aorta. The diagnosis aortic valve insufficiency and secondary angina pectoris was made.

She underwent surgical replacement of her aortic valve with a Medtronic Hall prosthetic valve No 21. The postoperative course was uneventful. Pathological evaluation of the excised strongly thickened and fibrotic trileaflet aortic valve was performed.

Microscopic findings in one of the rheumatoid leaflets showed granulation tissue with lymphoplastomocellular infiltration and some polymorphonuclear cells around two areas of fibrinoid necrosis surrounded by a palisade of histiocytes (figs 1 and 2). These findings are similar to the description of a developed typical rheumatoid nodule.

At follow up after four years the aortic valve prosthesis still functions well and the patient has no cardial signs and symptoms.

To our knowledge, this is the first illustrated report of typical rheumatoid nodules found in an aortic valve removed owing to aortic valve insufficiency in a patient with polyarticular JIA. Our patient never had any nodules on other locations. Valvular disease is rare in patients with JIA and consists of valvulitis with a substrate with non-specific features.

D L Madison
Department of Medicine, Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism, Oregon Health Sciences University, Portland OR 97201, USA

E Allen, A Deodhar
Department of Medicine, Division of Arthritis and Rheumatological Disease, Oregon Health Sciences University

L Morrison
Department of Medicine, Division of Dermatology, Oregon Health Sciences University

Correspondence to: Dr Madison; madisonald@ohsu.edu

References


changes of fibrosis and necrosis. Valvular involvement has been described in patients with all types of JIA, the aortic valve being most commonly affected. Valvular disease is associated with severe destructive articular disease. Furthermore, our case report confirms the possibility of successful mechanical aortic valve replacement in a case of severe progressive aortic valve insufficiency and secondary angina pectoris in a patient with polyarticular JIA.

We recommend regular cardiac appraisal as part of the routine assessment of every patient with JIA. Whenever cardiac murmurs are detected in these patients, echocardiographic assessment should be considered, because if there is valve insufficiency the cardiac function may deteriorate and cardiac surgery may be needed.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Dr AC van der Wal, pathologist, for his pathology specimen evaluation. We thank Dr FM Westerweel, rheumatologist, for allowing us to report on her patient.

References


2. Goossens et al reported a patient in whom a remission of Behçet's syndrome was induced with tumour necrosis factor (TNFα) blocking treatment. We would like to add our experience in a patient with a disease associated with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), treated with infliximab (Remicade).

A 47 year old male patient, born in Morocco, living in Israel, was diagnosed 14 years earlier with severe polyarthritis, moderate fever, asthenia, and persistent high erythrocyte sedimentation rate and C reactive protein. In parallel, the patient reported recurrent buccal and genital ulcers two to three times a month with papulopustular skin lesions on the feet. HLA-B5 (51) was positive. There was no eye involvement. A diagnosis of Behcet's disease associated with erosive, seropositive RA was suggested. The patient was treated with sulfasalazine and colchicine without improvement; steroid treatment with auranofin was added. The disease was poorly controlled with progressive erosions in hands, knees, and feet. Later, pulse steroids, methotrexate, azathioprine, and cyclosporin were added serially, either singly or in combination. In subsequent years he became dependent on steroids and never achieved complete remission. In December 2000 the patient was admitted to hospital with severe active polyarthritis, flexion contractures of the elbows, and an especially swollen left knee with Baker's cyst and severe erosive disease. The patient additionally had buccal and penile ulcers. Because of the lack of response to conventional treatment we decided to start him with infliximab (Remicade; Schering), a chimeric IgG monoclonal antibody directed against TNF. He received 300 mg intravenously (3 mg/kg) at intervals of two weeks, six weeks, and then every eight weeks. Two weeks after the first infusion the ulcers of mouth, penis, and other skin lesions were already considerably smaller and later disappeared. The polyarthritis improved considerably, except for the left knee, which required temporary treatment. Infliximab was given with continued colchicine and azathioprine. Our case, as in Goossens' report, suggests that infliximab may have a beneficial therapeutic effect in mucocutaneous and cutaneous lesions as well as pericardial tamponade requiring pericardial drainage in this case.

A Brucato, G Brambilla

Divisione Medica “Brena”, Ospedale Niguarda Ca’ Granda, Milan, Italy

Correspondence to: Dr G Brambilla, Divisione Medica “Brena”, Via Mamel 46, 12129, Milan, Italy; braimbil@tiscalinet.it

Remission of Behçet’s syndrome with TNFα blocking treatment
synovitis in Behcet’s disease. In our case in association with RA.

Controlled studies will be needed to assess adequately the full effect of TNF antagonists in Behcet’s disease.

M Rozenbaum, I Rosner, E Portnoy
Department of Rheumatology, Bnai Zion Medical Centre, Technion Faculty of Medicine, Haifa, Israel

Correspondence to: Dr Rosner
roser@tx.technion.ac.il

1 Goossens PH, Verburg RJ, Breedveld FC.

Fatigue and immune activity in Sjogren’s syndrome
Despite major desiccation of mucous membranes in Sjogren’s syndrome (SS), fatigue is often experienced by patients as the most disabling complaint.1 Unfortunately, there is no proper treatment available to combat the fatigue in SS. Beside a variety of somatic and non-somatic conditions,2,5 increased immune activity has been implicated as a cause of fatigue in autoimmune diseases.3 If responsible for fatigue in SS, it could serve as a treatment target. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to examine the relation between fatigue and immune variables in SS.

Thirty six consecutive patients with primary SS visiting our outpatient departments participated in this study. Two control groups were used: a group of 18 patients diagnosed with secondary SS, and a group of 30 non-medicated healthy controls. Diagnoses were based on the revised European criteria for the classification of SS.3 Control groups were matched for age and sex. Disease duration or treatment did not differ significantly between patients with primary and secondary SS. Patients with other chronic diseases were excluded from the study. The Dutch Fatigue Scale (DFS) was used to quantify fatigue. This validated questionnaire poses nine questions about different aspects of fatigue (table 1).1 Because depression is frequently observed in SS,5,6 a standardised psychiatric questionnaire (SCL-90) was used to rule out this potentially confounding variable for fatigue.6 Immunological activity was evaluated by assessing rheumatoid factor, antinuclear antibodies, presence of anti-SS-A and -SS-B, levels of immunoglobulins (IgG, IgM, and IgA), haemoglobin levels, leucocytes, thrombocytes, erythrocyte sedimentation rate, and C reactive protein (CRP). After preliminary analysis using correlation tests, the best model to explain fatigue was calculated by using multiple regression with calculation rate, and C reactive protein (CRP). After calculation, the best model to explain fatigue was calculated by using multiple regression with calculation rate, and C reactive protein (CRP). After calculation, the best model to explain fatigue was calculated by using multiple regression with calculation rate, and C reactive protein (CRP).

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Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>listlessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Perceived need for additional energy to finish required tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Verbalisation of an unending and overwhelming lack of energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Inability to restore energy, even after sleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Increase in rest requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Decreased libido</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Inability to maintain usual routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Impaired ability to concentrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Decreased performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fatigue was equally raised in patients with both primary and secondary SS, and differed significantly from that of healthy controls. Twenty one (58%) patients with primary SS scored “high” or “very high” out of the six ICDH categories for depression according to the SCL-90 criteria. These depression scores did not significantly differ from the scores in secondary SS patients. Further analysis showed that 79% of the fatigue in patients with primary SS could be explained by depression, total level of immunoglobulins, and thromboocyte counts (p<0.001). Both depression and thrombocyte counts showed a significant positive correlation, whereas levels of immunoglobulins showed a negative correlation.

Though tempting as a treatment target, the immune and inflammatory variables failed to predict fatigue satisfactorily in primary SS. Levels of immunoglobulins showed, surprisingly, a significant negative correlation. Thrombocyte counts showed a significant positive correlation. Although increases in thrombocytes follow the acute phase reaction, no significant correlation between thrombocyte counts and CRP levels were found. A chance association between fatigue and thrombocyte counts as well as immunoglobulin levels seems thus possible. Therefore, the intriguing question whether immune or inflammatory activity is a causative factor of chronic fatigue in SS remains unaddressed. Because no difference in fatigue was found between patients with primary and secondary SS, the presence of another autoimmune disease appears to have no additional effect on the amount of fatigue in SS. In agreement with findings of previous studies, a significant relation was found between the degree of fatigue and the level of depression in patients with primary SS.3 It is concluded that none of the laboratory variables reflecting immune activity predict fatigue satisfactorily in primary SS. Signs of depression, as present in most of the patients with primary SS, proved to be the most relevant cause of their exhausting fatigue. Therefore we recommend including a psychosomatic approach in the treatment of fatigue in primary SS.

1 H I Box, T M Vriesendorp, C G M Kollenberg
Department of Clinical Immunology, University Hospital Groningen, PO Box 30.001, 9700 RB Groningen, The Netherlands

W W I Kalk
Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, University Hospital Groningen, PO Box 30.001, 9700 RB Groningen, The Netherlands

Correspondence to: Dr W W I Kalk
kalk@chirurgie.rug.nl

References
wise men of steroid research, describes the history of the glucocorticoids graphically and in detail. He has enriched research in this field with significant contributions since the beginning of the 1960s and now looks back amusingly and expressively on the past decades. Luca Parente's contribution ranges from naturally occurring to synthetic glucocorticoids and their effects in the organism. The sections that deal with the desired anti-inflammatory/immunomodulatory effects and adverse reactions give a valuable overview.

A few chapters should be highlighted that are of particular interest for both rheumatologists and clinical immunologists. That on molecular and cellular aspects of cytokine regulation by glucocorticoids has been prepared very carefully from a didactic point of view. It not only describes T cell activation and the effects of glucocorticoids thereon, but also provides useful information for an understanding of the function and regulation of cytokines. It is recapitulated that the central therapeutic effects of glucocorticoids are ultimately the inhibition of the synthesis of interleukin 2 and interleukin 6; glucocorticoids influence the transcription of around 1% of all genes! However, they also have an influence on the translational and post-translational mechanisms by which proteins are synthesised, processed, and exported from cells. This fact applies, in particular, to the influence on cytokine metabolism. Just to mention a few key concepts: post-transcriptional, translational, and post-translational mechanisms; modulation of cytokine receptors; indirect effects that occur as a result of the extensive interactions among various cytokines.

The chapter written by John Kirwan is worth reading for the rheumatologist, as it deals with the clinical aspect of the systemic administration of glucocorticoids in chronic inflammatory arthritis (typified by rheumatoid arthritis (RA)), in vasculitic episodes and in polymyalgia rheumatica and giant cell arthritis (RA), in vasculitic episodes and in polymyalgia rheumatica and giant cell arthritis (Rituximab, on the one hand, and on radiological imaging (healing), progressive systemic sclerosis, mean clinical important difference, and oesteoarthrits Contact: Conference Organisers Q2Q, 7 Swan Street, Old Isworth, Middlesex TW7 6RJ, UK Tel: +44 (0)161 275 5993 Fax: +44 (0)161 275 5043 Email: Lisa@fs1.net.man.ac.uk

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14–18 Oct 2002; Nashville, Tennessee, USA
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Fax: (615) 343 7534
Website: www.eicosanoids.science.cayne.edu

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