
Leucopenia after gold and sulphasalazine treatment

Sir: I read the interesting report by Bliddal and colleagues of three patients who developed leucopenia after both gold and sulphasalazine treatment.1 HLA-DR3 as a marker for toxic reactions after treatment with gold or D-penicillamine could not be shown. Patient 1, however, was apparently a carrier of HLA-B7, at least until treatment. It is well known that female patients with rheumatoid arthritis, who are HLA-B27 positive, have a significantly higher risk for drug induced agranulocytosis, not only after treatment with levamisole2,3 but also with other antirheumatic drugs.4 Thus under these conditions the possibility should be considered that in this patient, in the absence of HLA-D3, HLA-B27 may be the risk indicator for her relapsing leucopenia.

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Sirs: Thank you for your interesting comments on our article about HLA types of patients with leucopenia.

Our patients all had classical rheumatoid arthritis and none was positive for antinuclear antibodies. The observation in a small group of patients of HLA-B27 in just one case does not justify further conclusions. Like many others we no longer use leva-
misole treatment for patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

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Low incidence of antinuclear antibodies in dermatomyositis with malignancy

Sir: In 1958 Walton and Adams first classified 'polymyositis/dermatomyositis with malignancy' as a distinct subset of polymyositis. Recent prospective controlled studies, however, cast doubt upon the increased incidence of malignancy in polymyositis/dermatomyositis.1 If the association of polymyositis/dermatomyositis with malignancy happens by mere coincidence, serological features in these diseases with and without malignancy should not be different. The purpose of our preliminary study was to clarify this point in 36 patients with dermatomyositis.

Dermatomyositis was diagnosed according to the diagnostic criteria of Bohan and Peter.2 Thirty six patients were diagnosed as having pure adult dermatomyositis. These patients were further subdivided into two groups: 12 patients with dermatomyositis with malignancy (nine definite and three probable dermatomyositis) and 24 patients with dermatomyositis without malignancy (16 definite and eight probable dermatomyositis). Patients with dermatomyositis which overlapped with other connective tissue diseases were excluded from this analysis. Existence of malignancies was proven histologically by biopsy or necropsy, or both. Antinuclear antibodies were tested by indirect immunofluorescence with HEP2 cells (Kallstad, Chaska, Mn, USA) as substrates. Serum samples giving apparent fluorescence at a dilution of 1:40 were considered positive. The \( \chi^2 \) test was used for the statistical analysis.

Positive antinuclear antibodies were found in 13/24 (54%) patients with dermatomyositis without malignancy, but they were found in only 2/12 (17%) of those with malignancy (p<0.03). The low incidence of antinuclear antibodies in dermatomyositis with malignancy suggests the presence of a different serological background from that in the dermatomatoses.1 This conclusion supports the view that a distinct subset of dermato-
myositis exists—dermatomyositis with malignancy.

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Inhibition of xanthine oxidase by allopurinol: its lack of effect on models of inflammation

Sir: In response to an article published in the Annals, entitled "Inhibition of xanthine oxidase by allopurinol: A therapeutic option for ischaemia induced pathologic processes?",1 we wish to report our findings on the effect of xanthine oxidase inhibition in models of joint

1 Walton J N, Adams R D. Polymyositis. Edin-
4 Bohan A, Peter J B. Polymyositis and dermatomyo-
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*Ann Rheum Dis* 1990 49: 422
doi: 10.1136/ard.49.6.422-a

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