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. 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 sialogry
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.

Logistic regression analysis was performed
to identify diagnostic criteria that might be
used as predictive indicators for differentiat-
ing between patients with and without
Sjögren's syndrome. Univariate logistic
regression analysis showed that the six
diagnostic criteria assessed (sialography,
sonography, Saxon's test, Schirmer test, SS-A,
and SS-B) did correlate with a positive
diagnosis of Sjögren's syndrome, indicating
that these six criteria, if used alone, could
effectively predict the presence of Sjögren's
syndrome (table 1).

On multivariate analysis, however, only
sialography and sonography showed signifi-
cant correlations with a positive diagnosis of Sjögren's syndrome (table 1); when sialogra-
phy was used together with the functional
and serological criteria, only sialography
showed a significant correlation. If sonogra-
phy was used instead of sialography, only
sonography displayed a significant correlation
with a positive diagnosis of Sjögren's syn-
drome (table 1). Collectively, these findings
suggest that the sonography performs as well
as sialography in differentiating between
parotid glands affected by Sjögren's syndrome
and normal glands. In contrast, the other
diagnostic criteria did not perform as well as
the two imaging criteria.

Some discrepancies were found between
diagnostic performance in the present
study and that in previous studies. For ex-
ample, Schirmer's test in our study performed
poorly compared with the performance re-
port by Vitali et al. SS-A and SS-B displayed
high sensitivity and low specificity in our
study, whereas low sensitivity and high
specificity were found in the previous study.

These inconsistencies may be due to the
differences in patient groups or in techniques,
or both. Despite these differences, the per-
formance by sialography was similar, consist-
ent with the notion that the imaging tech-
niques, including sialography, provide reliable
results in the diagnosis of Sjögren's syn-
drome.

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
significantly 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 correctly.
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References

Nail lesions in psoriatic arthritis: recovery with sulphasalazine treatment

Treatment with sulphasalazine has been reported to be effective in psoriatic arthritis (PsA). However, the role of sulphasalazine in cutaneous lesions has been surrounded by controversies. As far as we know its possible beneficial effect on nail lesions has not been reported.

Case report

A 25 year old man had presented with nail lesions considered to be psoriatic since 1996. During the same period he started to have pain in both knee joints. Since 1998 he had also had pain in the distal interphalangeal (DIP) joints. At the end of the same year the patient consulted a rheumatologist. On clinical examination, both knee joints were swollen and a Baker's cyst was present at the right side. The 4th and 5th DIP joints of both hands were red, painful, and slightly swollen. Nail deformities were present in both hands (fig 1A) and feet. Psoriatic lesions of the auditory deformities were present in both hands (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 sulphasalazine and the improvement of the nail lesions, it can be considered that sulphasalazine played a beneficial part in the pathological condition of our patient. Derma
tological assessment of patients treated with sulphasalazine for PsA has been reported in two series; according to the report published in the series of Gupta et al, patients treated with sulphasalazine for PsA showed signs of cutaneous improvement compared with those receiving placebo. The series of Fari et al reports improved cutaneous lesions in as few as 3/15 patients treated with sulphasalazine 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; 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 sulfa
salazine not only for PsA but also for treating psoriatic nails.

Figure 1 Left index finger (A) before, (B) after six months' treatment with sulphasalazine. The nail deformities in both hands are no longer present.

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 treat- ment. 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.** 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 Tefépine (314 treatments), Endobuline (81 treatments), and Gammapard (three treatments). All the patients had a corticoiddependent or refractory autoimmune disease (mostly polymyositis, 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 determined by the patients as very good in 17% of patients (17% very good, 33% modest, 33% nil). The efficacy of the IV immunoglobulin was described by the senior doctor as very good in 33%, good 30%, nil 17%. Evaluation of the efficacy described by the patients themselves was based on purely functional criteria (general condition, pain, weakness, joint mobility, functional capacity, and quality of life).
The difference seems to be modest, yet for the $2701 against $2471 for a treatment at home.  

The mean cost of a treatment in hospital was $2701 against $2471 for a treatment at home. The difference seems to be modest, yet for the $2701 against $2471 for a treatment at home.  

### Effective cost at home 

| Cost for one treatment at home | $2471 |

### Cost for one treatment in hospital : $2701 |

**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.**

### 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 muscular deficit, etc., which explains the difference between the two evaluations. Cases where the IV immunoglobulin resulted in a reduced use of corticosteroids, or cases where IV immunoglobulins made it possible to avoid using immunosuppressive drugs were regarded as a success by the senior doctor, whereas patients did not necessarily have the same impression.

The 23 patients (77%) who said they had benefited from the IV immunoglobulin treatments at home gave the following reasons: better comfort (n=12), presence of next of kin (n=10), more occupation (n=6), time gain (n=5), better mood (n=3), maintaining activities (n=3), avoiding repeated trips to the hospital (n=3), better quality of sleep (n=2), better food (n=2). The seven patients (23%) who preferred the treatments at the hospital gave the following reasons: better monitoring, less trouble (IV immunoglobulin collected at the hospital pharmacy, calling the nurse at home, collection of tubes, needles, and per fusion stand at the pharmacy and at home).

The mean cost of a treatment in hospital was $2701 against $2471 for a treatment at home. The difference seems to be modest, yet for the 277 treatments performed at home over five years, the savings for the community amount to $63 691 with $85 377 of budget revenues for 277 treatments performed at home over 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 Elkayam O. To Monique Tomczak who typed this document; Thomas Rémy, Bernard Dauvergne, and Mazen Elkayam O. To Monique Tomczak who typed this document; Thomas Rémy, Bernard Dauvergne, and Mazen Elkayam O. To Monique Tomczak who typed this document; Thomas Rémy, Bernard Dauvergne, and Mazen Elkayam O.

### Table 1 Evaluation of the cost of at home IV immunoglobulin treatments (n=277) and comparison with the theoretical cost in hospital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV immunoglobulin</th>
<th>Theoretical cost in hospital</th>
<th>Effective cost at home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical cost in hospital</td>
<td>$2055 (deduction on drug budget)</td>
<td>$2363 (15% of retrocession overcost)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost for one treatment in hospital</td>
<td>$2701</td>
<td>$2471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost for one treatment at home</td>
<td>$2471</td>
<td>$2471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>$41 (deduction on small equipment budget)</td>
<td>$41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cost for 277 treatments</td>
<td>$748274 (representing the virtual economy made by the hospital (drug budget + small equipment))</td>
<td>$684588 (representing the effective savings for the community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings achieved for 277 treatments</td>
<td>$580556 (representing the virtual economy made by the hospital department (drug budget + small equipment))</td>
<td>$85377 (representing the budget income for the hospital administration)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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: coronaropathy, 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
8. Professional collaboration with a home care organisation for visiting nurses and for collection of tubing and used bottles
9. Effective flow rate of IV immunoglobulin no quicker than 10 g per two hours
10. Prevention of side effects (representing the budget income for the hospital administration)
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 over the scapula was raised. The rest of the examination was normal.

Initial investigations showed a normal full blood count, bone profile, and inflammatory markers, and a normal radiograph of the right shoulder and scapula. Subsequent magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) showed a poorly circumscribed heterogeneous soft tissue mass between the chest wall and the scapula (fig 1). The signal intensity was similar to that of adjacent muscles with interspersed strands of high signal similar to those of fat. No significant contrast enhancement was seen. The lesion was biopsied under computed tomography guidance and a histological examination showed elastic fibres within a collagenous fibrous tissue with entrapped adipose tissue, consistent with a diagnosis of elastofibroma. Surgical excision was performed because the mass was causing pain. Postoperative histology confirmed an elastofibroma. The patient has remained asymptomatic after surgery with no recurrence of the mass. Elastofibroma dorsi, 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 strands. The differential diagnosis includes desmoid tumours, neurifibroma, 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.
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 × 10^6 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 (fluid 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 trauma. Bursal aspiration showed that the unremarkable past medical history, which noted that development of infection after this procedure occurred in 12% of a series of cases. Most frequently bacteria cause infections, but unusual pathogens like fungi have also been reported. Candida septica bursitis is extremely rare. After a thorough review of the Medline database (from 1966 to January 2001) using medical subject headings, and keyword searches that included “septic bursitis” and “Candida”, we found only five reports. Two caused by C albicans, two by C tropicalis, and another one by C lusitaniae (table 1). Characteristically, in all the cases, and in the present report, different risk factors or underlying diseases were found. Four cases were caused by haematogenous spread and two induced by direct penetration, including our case. The olecranon bursa was affected in three cases, including the present report. C parapsilosis is a well known cause of arthritis that has been described secondary to systemic dissemination in intravenous drug users, and also by direct inoculation secondary 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 the size of the olecranon bursa. The patient had never presented with fever, arthralgias, or any general complaints. Laboratory studies, including a test for antibodies to HIV, were normal or negative. Magnetic resonance imaging was performed showing multiseptate bursitis; the adjacent structures were normal. A removal of 10 ml bursa fluid again yielded a positive culture for Candida that was later identified as C parapsilosis (Majadahonda, Madrid), National Centre for Microbiology. Antifungal sensitivity testing showed a minimal inhibitory concentration for amphotericin B of 1 mg/l, 5-fluorocytosine 0.25 mg/l, fluconazole 0.23 mg/l, itraconazole 0.03 mg/l, and ketoconazole 0.015 mg/l. By the end of August, oral fluconazole was started at a dose of 400 mg/day for seven days, and then 200 mg daily. Recovery was slow and the patient needed repeated drainage. As follow up cultures were still positive, on 27 September it was decided to carry out surgical debridement with complete excision of the olecranon bursa. This material was not cultured, but histopathological analysis was performed demonstrating pseudohyphae structures, without granulomatous reaction or foreign bodies. After bursectomy, the patient continued fluconazole treatment (same maintenance dose) for six weeks more. Six months later he is completely asymptomatic.

Infection of superficial bursae (olecranon, prepatellar, and infrapatellar) is generally associated with different occupations or physical activities. Local trauma may predispose micro-organisms to penetrate by the transcutaneous route. Similarly, intrabursal steroid injection, a habitual therapeutic procedure, may lead to infection. Weinstein et al noted that development of infection after this procedure occurred in 12% of a series of cases. Most frequently bacteria cause infections, but unusual pathogens like fungi have also been reported. Candida septica bursitis is extremely rare. After a thorough review of the Medline database (from 1966 to January 2001) using medical subject headings, and keyword searches that included “septic bursitis” and “Candida”, we found only five reports. Two caused by C albicans, two by C tropicalis, and another one by C lusitaniae (table 1). Characteristically, in all the cases, and in the present report, different risk factors or underlying diseases were found. Four cases were caused by haematogenous spread and two induced by direct penetration, including our case. The olecranon bursa was affected in three cases, including the present report. C parapsilosis is a well known cause of arthritis that has been described secondary to systemic dissemination in intravenous drug users, and also by direct inoculation secondary 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.

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Infection of superficial bursae (olecranon, prepatellar, and infrapatellar) is generally associated with different occupations or
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.

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Hench-Schönlein purpura: a possible complication of hepatitis C related liver cirrhosis

Hench-Schönlein purpura (HSP) is a systemic small vessel vasculitis predominantly affecting children and, less commonly, adults. Clinical HSP includes a tetrad of palpable purpura, arthritis, abdominal pain, and glomerulonephritis. Adults may 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 and is usually self-limiting with colicky abdominal pain, but may progress to ischaemic bowel perforation. 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 dyspnoea, malaise, cough, fever, 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 computed tomographic (CT) scan of the abdomen showed portal hypertension, a small cirrhotic liver, small spleen, omental and peripheral 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 was almost certainly, given palpable purpura, haematuria, abdominal pain, and a skin biopsy demonstrating IgA complexes (fig 1). However, the possibility of hepatitis C associated IgA/GM 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.2 Adult and paediatric HSP differ in the incidence and severity of renal involvement, with nephropathy and progression to renal insufficiency being greater in adult HSP2 which is associated with a poor outcome.3 Gastrointestinal manifestations vary widely and include abdominal pain, nausea/vomiting, intestinal haemorrhage and, rarely, perforation.4 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,5 but fail to deal prospectively with the prevention of liver metabolism of IgA circulating immune complexes. Adults respond favourably to corticosteroids and may be managed with short courses of treatment,6 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 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.
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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haemoglobin (g/l)</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>135–175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White blood cell count (&lt;10³/l)</td>
<td>14000</td>
<td>3.4–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platelet count (&lt;10³/l)</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>0.15–420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complement C3 (mg/l)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>880–2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complement C4 (mg/l)</td>
<td>&lt;100</td>
<td>160–470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serum creatinine (µmol/l)</td>
<td>88</td>
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<td>Alkaline phosphatase (µ/l)</td>
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<td>Aspartate aminotransferase (µ/l)</td>
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<td>Lactate dehydrogenase (µ/l)</td>
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<td>Total bilirubin (µmol/l)</td>
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<td>Albunin (g/l)</td>
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<td>Urine analysis (RBC/HPF)</td>
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<td>0–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANA titre</td>
<td>1/40</td>
<td>1/40</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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

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.

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 hips, knees, shoulders, and elbows and small joint deformation. A diagnosis of juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) polycarticular type, functional class IV was made. No nodules were present. Laboratory analysis at that time showed borderline positive serum rheumatoid factor (RF) 50 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 sulphasalazine because of proteinuria. In 1990 she was treated for a unilateral uveitis. In 1992 her right eye was replaced. Until 1993 cardiac examination showed no murmurs and chest roentgenogram was normal.

In November 1995 she was admitted because of a six month history of progressive 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 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 tri-leaflet aortic valve was performed.

Microscopic findings in one of the rheumatoid leaflets showed granulomatous tissue with lymphoplasmocellular 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.1

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

To our knowledge, this case 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 inflammatory infiltrate (c) (haematoxylin and eosin). Bar represents 400 µm.

References


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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. FM Westerweel, rheumatologic surgeon, for his surgical description and to Dr. FM van der Meulen, cardiologist, for the diagnostic procedure. We thank Dr. FM Westerweel, rheumatologic surgeon, for the surgical description and to Dr. FM van der Meulen, cardiologist, for the diagnostic procedure. We are also grateful to Dr. FM van der Meulen, cardiologist, for the diagnostic procedure and to Dr. FM Westerweel, rheumatologic surgeon, for the surgical description.

References


Polymyalgia rheumatica and pericardial tamponade

Polymyalgia rheumatica causes symmetrical stiffness in the neck, shoulder, and pelvic girdles, and affects middle aged and elderly people, with a higher incidence among women. A group of systemic, non-specific complaints such as weight loss, moderate fever, asthenia, and persistent high erythrocyte sedimentation rate are other clinical features. The association of polymyalgia rheumatica and pericardial effusion has already been described in two cases. 3 A 73 year old woman was admitted for the evaluation of pericardial effusion and mild anemia. Polymyalgia rheumatica was suspected because the patient had had asthenia, stiffness, and pain in the shoulders and hips for about a year before coming to hospital. She had also lost 5 kg in a few months. A few days before admission she had presented worsening dyspnoea.

An echocardiogram showed large pericardial effusion and initial findings of cardiac tamponade (right atrial and right ventricular diastolic collapse), so a pericardiocentesis was done: polymerase chain reaction tests in the pericardial fluid for Mycobacterium tuberculosis and cultures for aerobes and anaerobes were negative; tumoral cells were absent. Serological tests for antibodies to cytomegalovirus, herpes simplex and Epstein-Barr viruses, anti-smooth muscle, antinuclear, anti-DNA, and anti-extractable nuclear antigen antibodies were negative in all the tests and the break-up time were also normal. The erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) was 130 mm/h, and the C reactive protein (CRP) was 85 mg/l.

The patient was first treated with indometacin (50 mg twice a day) for a week, with no improvement, and then with low doses of prednisone (10 mg/day): the symptoms markedly improved and the ESR and CRP dropped to 27 mm/h and 12 mg/l, respectively, in few weeks. An echocardiogram a month later was negative for pericardial effusion; ESR and CRP were also normal.

The patient has remained entirely well after a follow up of one year.

The presenting symptoms (girdles bilateral and symmetrical stiffness and pain) are accompanied by systemic features (fatigue, weight loss, raised ESR) and the marked improvement after prednisone confirm the diagnosis of polymyalgia rheumatica.

As far as we know this is the first report of pericardial tamponade requiring pericardial drainage in this disease.

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References


Remission of Behçet’s syndrome with TNFα blocking treatment

Goossens et al reported on a patient in whom a remission of Behçet’s syndrome was induced with tumour necrosis factor (TNF) blocking treatment. We would like to add our experience in a patient with Behçet’s 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 CRP. In parallel, the patient reported recurrent buccal and genital ulcers two to three times a month with papulopustular skin lesions on the feet.

HLA-BS (51) was positive. There was no eye involvement. A diagnosis of Behçet’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 treat 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 total replacement. The patient was discharged 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...
synovitis in Behçet’s disease, in our case in association with RA. Controlled studies will be needed to assess adequately the full effect of TNF antagonists in Behçet’s disease.

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Fatigue and immune activity in Sjögren’s syndrome

Despite major desiccation of mucous membranes in Sjögren’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,2–4 increased immune activity has been implicated as a cause of fatigue in autoimmune diseases.5 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 34 non-medicated healthy diagnoses. Diagnoses were based on the revised European criteria for the classification of SS.6 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).7 Because depression is frequently observed in SS,8 a standardised psychiatric questionnaire (SCL-90) was used to rule out this potential confounding variable for fatigue.9 Immunological activity was evaluated by assessing rheumatoid factor, antinuclear antibodies, presence of anti-SS-A and anti-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 forward selection (SPSS version 8.0). Independent Student t tests were used to compare the studied groups.

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 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 thromboocyte counts showed a significant positive correlation, whereas levels of immunoglobulins showed a negative correlation. Though treating 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. Thromboocyte counts showed a significant positive correlation. Although increases in thromboocytes follow the acute phase reaction, no significant correlation between thromboocyte counts and CRP levels were found. A chance association between fatigue and thromboocyte 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 unravelled. 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.10 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.

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References

Glucocorticoids

Eids J N Goulding, R J Flower. (Pp 216; DM240.) Basel: Birkhäuser, 2001. ISBN 3-7643-6059-3. (Milestones in drug therapy. Series editors M J Parmham, J Brunivel.) People are bound to think: Oh no! Is yet another book about drugs that we are using successfully every day really necessary? Well, the answer to this question is: Yes, it is! More than 50 years after the clinical introduction of these drugs, updates are necessary to establish Milestones in drug therapy (the title of the series published by Birkhäuser). Sometimes unnoticed by all who use glucocorticoids, new, not always spectacular, but still significant knowledge has been gained about these vital drugs and how they should be administered. The authors try to put this across in a readable form, which means that known information is recapitulated concisely and new information is included. A very good example are the chapters that deal with the basic mechanisms of action. However, the only real criticism also applies to this point: some comments are redundant and tighter editing would have improved individual contributions.

Renowned authors reflect upon the most important facets of treatment with glucocorticoids. These facets include the history as well as basic biology, the development of synthetic compounds, extensive discussions about the glucocorticoid receptor, the dynamics of cytokine and other gene regulations by glucocorticoids, the interrelationship between exogenous and endogenous steroids, and a clinical section which deals with the use of steroids in asthma, arthritis, and inflammatory bowel disease. Allan Munck, one of the
wise of 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 arteritis (GCA), and in various connective tissue and vascular features.

up to and including the year 2000. Overall, this is a good example of how knowledge on established drugs such as the glucocorticoids can be clearly updated.

F Buttgereit

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Tenth Intensive Applied Epidemiology Course for Rheumatologists
11–15 Mar 2002; Manchester, UK
No previous experience in epidemiology is needed. The course is residential and limited to 25 places
Contact: Ms Lisa McClain, ARC Epidemiology Unit, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PT, UK
Tel: +44 (0)161 275 5993
Fax: +44 (0)161 275 5043
Email: Lisa@fs1.sct.man.ac.uk

OMERACT VI
11–14 Apr 2002; Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
Includes two modules: MRI and economics; and five workshops: patients’ perceptions, imaging (healing), progressive systemic sclerosis, mean clinical important difference, and osteoarthritis
Contact: Conference Organisers Q2Q, 7 Swan Street, Old Isworth, Middlessex TW7 6RJ, UK
Fax: +44 20 8569 9555
Email: q2q@q2q.co.uk

British Society for Rheumatology XIXth AGM
23–26 Apr 2002; Brighton, UK
Contact: BSR, 41 Eagle Street, London WC1R 4TJ, UK
Website: www.rheumatology.org.uk

4th EULAR Sonography Course
25–28 April 2002; Madrid, Spain
The course is entitled “Practical use of musculoskeletal ultrasonography”
Contact: Esperanza Naredo
Email: enaredo@eresmas.com
Website: www.eular.org/courses and www.sameint.it/eular

10th International Vasculitis and ANCA Workshop
25–28 Apr 2002; Cleveland, Ohio, USA
Contact: Debora J Bork, The Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Desk A50, Center for Vasculitis Care and Research, 9500 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44195, USA
Tel: 216 445 8333
Fax: 216 445 7569
Email: borkd@ccf.org
Website for registration and abstract submission: www.clevelandclinicmeded.com/courses/Vasculitis2002.asp

International Congress: New Trends in Osteoarthritis
9–11 May 2002; Milan, Italy
Contact: Organising Secretariat, O.I.C. S.r.l., Via Fatebenefratelli 19, 20121 Milan, Italy
Tel: +39 02 65 71 200
Fax: +39 02 65 71 270
Email: osteoarthritis@oic.it

IOF World Congress on Osteoporosis
10–14 May 2002; Lisbon, Portugal
Contact: IOF Secretariat, 71 cours Albert Thomas, F-69003 Lyon, France
Tel: +33 472 91 41 77
Fax: +33 472 36 90 52
Email: info@ioflyon.org
Website: www.osteofound.org

5th European Conference on Systemic Lupus Erythematosus
26–30 May 2002; Athens, Greece
Chairman Professor HM Moutsopoulos
Secretariat: Amphitrition Congress Organising Bureau
Email: hmoutsp@med.uoa.gr
Email: congress@amphitrition.gr

Annual European Congress of Rheumatology
12–15 June 2002; Stockholm, Sweden
Contact: Fred Wyss, Executive Secretary EULAR, Wirikonerstrasse 15, CH-8032, Zurich, Switzerland
Tel: +41 1 383 9690
Fax: +41 1 383 9810
Email: eular@bluewin.ch
Website: www.eular.org

10th International Congress on Behçet’s Disease
27–29 June 2002; Berlin, Germany
Under the auspices of the International Society for Behçet’s Disease
Up to eight young investigator awards, each of $500, will be awarded on the basis of abstracts submitted
Contact: Professor Ch C Zouboulis, Department of Dermatology, University Medical Centre Benjamin Franklin, The Free University of Berlin, Fabeckstrasse 60–62, 14195 Berlin, Germany
Fax: 49 30 84456908
Email: zoubbere@zedat.fu-berlin.de
Website: www.users.fu-berlin.de/~zoubbere
15SBD website: www.behcet.ws

29th Scandinavian Congress of Rheumatology
15–18 Aug 2002; Tromso, Norway
Contact: Hans Nossent, Department of Rheumatology, University Hospital Tromso, Norway
Tel: 47 776 27294
Fax: 47 776 27258
Email: 29cr2002@rit.no or revhan@rit.no

Translational Research in Autoimmunity
21–22 Sep 2002; Pavia, Italy
Contact: Organising secretariat: eventi S.R.L., Corso Cavour, 18/20 - 27100 Pavia, Italy
Email: tra@e20pr.com
Website: www.e20pr.com
Congress website: www.medicine.ucsd.edu/albani/2001meeting

OsteoArthritis Research Society International (OARSI) World Congress
22–25 Sep 2002; Sydney, Australia
Contact: OsteoArthritis Research Society International (OARSI), 2025 M Street, NW, Suite 800, Washington DC 20036, USA
Tel: +1 202 367 1177

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10th International Congress on Antiphospholipid Antibodies

29 Sep–3 Oct 2002; Sicily, Italy
Deadline for abstracts 1 April 2002
Contact: Secretariat, 10th International Congress on Antiphospholipid Antibodies, c/o Kenes International, PO Box 50006, Tel Aviv 61500, Israel
Tel: 972 3 5140018/9
Fax: 972 3 5140077 or 972 3 5172484
Email: aps@kenes.com
Website: www.kenes.com/aps

Third International Congress on Spondyloarthropathies

2–5 Oct 2002; Gent, Belgium
Topics covered will be:
• Innate immunity
• Genetics and HLA-B27
• Animal models and pathogenesis
• Clinical research and therapy
Deadline for abstract submission 31 March 2002
Contact: Organisation and secretariat, Medicongress, Waalpoel 28–34, B-9960 Assenede, Belgium
Tel: +32 9 344 39 59
Fax: +32 9 344 40 10
Email: congresses@medicongress.com
Website: www.medicongress.com

7th International Conference on Eicosanoids and Other Bioactive Lipids in Cancer, Inflammation and Related Diseases

14–17 Oct 2002; Nashville, Tennessee, USA
Contact: Lawrence J Marnett, Biochemistry Department, Vanderbilt University, School of Medicine, Nashville TN 37232-0146, USA
Tel: (615) 343 7329
Fax: (615) 343 7534
Website: www.eicosanoids.science.eyane.edu

66th American College of Rheumatology AGM

25–29 Oct 2002; New Orleans, USA
Contact: ACR, Ronald F Olejko, Director of Conferences and Meetings, 1800 Century Place, Suite 250, Atlanta, Georgia 30045–4300, USA
Tel: +1 404 633 3777
Fax: +1 404 633 1870
Email: acr@rheumatology.org
Website: www.rheumatology.org

Third International Meeting on Social and Economic Aspects of Osteoporosis and Osteoarthritis

7–9 November, 2002; Barcelona, Spain
Contact: Yolande Piette Communication, Boulevard Kleyer 108, 4000 Liège, Belgium
Tel: 32 4 254 12 25
Fax: 32 4 254 12 90
Email: ypc@compuserve.com

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Future EULAR congresses

18–21 June 2003; EULAR 2003 Lisbon, Portugal
9–12 June 2004; EULAR 2004 Berlin, Germany
8–11 June 2005; EULAR 2005 Vienna, Austria
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Fatigue and immune activity in Sjögren's syndrome

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