Objectives In order to establish the prevalence of tuberculosis infection in RA patients undergoing CPT, we analysed medical charts of consecutive patients affected by these disease who underwent this regimen.

Methods All the records were from patients attending the clinic for at least 2 years since the CPT administration and were analysed in order to detect a clinical diagnosis of tuberculosis. Routine blood analysis and a Chest x-ray film was available for all the patients in the period established for the follow-up, even if asymptomatic. At present, 11 females (mean age 57.54 years, range 40–74) have been identified, who took 1 gr of Methylprednisolone i.v. daily in a 3-day course of CPT. One of them was taking methotrexate, 3 cyclosporin and 4 the combination of cyclosporin and methotrexate; 3 patients was under no DMARD. CPT was already administered in 3 patients no more than once in the previous year.

Results Two patients revealed a tuberculosis infection, characterised by cavitory lung involvement and meningitis respectively; diagnosis was confirmed by standard methods for tuberculosis in both the patients. One patient affected by tuberculosis belonged to the treatment group CPT + methotrexate, while the other suspended methotrexate less than one year before the administration of CPT.

Conclusion This finding underlines the necessity of close monitoring for severe opportunistic infections in rheumatoid patients during treatment with CPT and MTX, but seem to suggest a more prominent role played by CPT with respect to other DMARDs.

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AB0047 PROGRESSION OF RADIOLOGICAL DAMAGE IN PATIENTS WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS IN CLINICAL REMISSION; A PROSPECTIVE TWO YEAR FOLLOW-UP STUDY

ET Molenaar, AE Voskuyl, HJ Dinant, DP Bezemer, BA Dijkmans. *Rheumatology, Vrije Universiteit Medical Centre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

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Background

Objectives The aim of the present study was to investigate the progression of radiological damage in patients with RA in clinical remission during a follow-up of two years.

Methods RA patients (n = 187), in remission as defined by the ACR/Pinals Criteria were included. Radiographs of hands and feet were made at baseline, and 2 years. Radiological damage was assessed according to the Sharp-van der Heijde method (score ranging from 0–448; (SHS)). SHS at baseline and after two years were compared in the complete cohort as well as in subgroups of patients with persistent remission and those suffering from exacerbations (Wilcoxon test). The following variables, measured at baseline, were assessed as possible riskfactors for radiological progression: number of tender and swollen joints, Ritchie score, Disease Activity Score (DAS), serum titers of IgM

and IgA rheumatoid factors, the visual analogue scale (VAS) for the physicians impression of disease activity and the Health Assessment Questionnaire (HAQ) score.

Results At baseline and after two years, the mean SHS of the complete group were 49 and 51 (p < 0.001). In the subgroup of persistent remission, the mean SHS were 52 and 53 (p = 0.004). No significant correlations were found between progression of radiographic damage and baseline variables (rho < 0.1, p > 0.1). In the subgroup of exacerbation, the mean SHS were 46 and 51 (p < 0.001). Progression of radiographic damage correlated significantly with the following variables at baseline: SHS (rho 0.40), HAQ-score (rho 0.28), serum IgM-RF (rho 0.29), serum IgA-RF (rho 0.25), but not with the VAS and the DAS.

Conclusion Radiological damage proceeds in RA patients in remission and is not related to disease activity.

AB0048 RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS IN ACROMEGALIC PATIENT: A CASE REPORT

V Çobankara, İ Aprağ, MA Öztürk, Y Ertenli, S Kiraz, M Çalgüneri. *Rheumatology, Hacettepe University School of Medicine, Ankara, Turkey*

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Background Acromegalic arthropathy is a noninflammatory condition in which cartilage hypertrophy and hyperplasia lead to the disruption of joint geometry and chondrocyte metabolism, and ultimately to degenerative changes. It is reversible in cases of early and prompt diagnosis. Rheumatoid arthritis is an inflammatory disease with joint destruction. Erosion in rheumatoid arthritis is caused by invasion of articular cartilage by the synovial pannus. Erosion in rheumatoid arthritis may be regressed with early and aggressive treatment. In this report we present a case of acromegaly who developed rheumatoid arthritis.

Objectives

Methods Case report: A 64-year-old male was admitted in April 2000 for evaluation of a 2-year history of polyarthritis. He was followed in 1985 with symptoms and signs of acromegaly, which was confirmed by radiology and a basal GH level of 30 mU/L. His acromegalic features improved after he had been operated. In 1995, therapy with sandostadin was started. In 1997, he was given external radiation. In 1998, he started to complain symmetric polyarthritis in proximal interphalangeal and metacarpophalangeal, wrist, and knee joints. In laboratory evaluation, erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) was 93 mm/hour and rheumatoid factor was 685 IU/L. No improvement was observed with the treatment protocol consisting of non-steroid anti-inflammatory drug and exercise which was given in another hospital. Two years later, he was evaluated in our rheumatology clinic. At that time, he had arthritis in PIF, MCF, and wrist joints and three-hour morning stiffness. Bilateral ulnar deviation at MCF joint and interosseous muscle atrophy were observed. In laboratory examination, ESR, CRP, Hb, RF, platelet count were 89 mm/hour, 6.7 mg/dL, 12.6 gr/dL, 789 IU/L, 540000/ml respectively. In radiological evaluation, osteoporosis in lumbar vertebrae and in hand graph were observed. Widening and tufting of distal phalanx and subchondral erosive and cystic changes in PIF and MCF joints were seen. In MRI, synovitis and erosive changes were marked. The patient was diagnosed as rheumatoid arthritis and treated with methotrexate, sulfasalazine, and hydroxychloroquine. After three months of treatment, the patient improved regarding in clinical and laboratory values. He is still being followed by our clinic in good health.