Background: The risk of cardiovascular disease in patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is 1.5-2 fold higher than in people of the same age and sex of the general population.1-3 This marked risk is attributed to the systemic chronic inflammation which is characteristic of the disease.

Objectives: The aim of this study is to evaluate cardiovascular risk factors and early atherosclerosis in rheumatoid arthritis patients, treated with biological agents.

Methods: This is a prospective, observational study. Thirty-five patients treated with synthetic DMARDs with no previous history of a cardiovascular event included. We compared total cholesterol (TC), high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-c), low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-c), triglycerides (TGs), Apolipoprotein A1 (ApoA1), Apolipoprotein B (ApoB) and Lipoprotein A (LpA), the ratio of the aorta/bloodstream against oxidized LDL (anti-oxLDL), systolic blood pressure, inflammatory markes as C-reactive protein (CRP) and erythrocytes sedimentation rate (ESR) between baseline and after 6 months of biological agents initiation. An ultrasonographic measurement of intima-media thickness (IMT) of carotids was also performed by an experienced sonographer at baseline and after one-year follow-up.

Results: As regards the demographic characteristics of the patients, the mean (SD) age was 54 (14) years, disease duration 4.3 (1.4) years, 22.9% were smokers and 68.6% were women. Anti-TNF was administered in 71.4% of patients while the rest non anti-TNF was given as treatment. Six months after treatment initiation, patients presented with a significant increase in mean (SD) HDL[69 (19) vs 58 (15)] and ApoA1[177 (34) vs 162 (31)] levels (p value <0,001) with a simultaneous significant reduction of mean (SD) systolic blood pressure [128 (12) vs 136 (14)] and the anti of-oxLDL[0,132 (0,042) vs 0,190 (0,056)], IMT was also reduced after one-year reassessment [0,3 (0,3) mm vs 0,9 (0,3)mm, (p value <0,001 for all comparisons)].

Conclusion: Biological agents administration was accompanied by an improved lipid profile in a six-month period and a significant reduction of IMT, confirming that RA patients are prone to early atherosclerosis and probably biological agents initiation correlates strongly with cardiovascular risk reduction.

REFERENCES:

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[AB0162]

OCULAR MANIFESTATIONS IN PATIENTS WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

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Background: Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is the most common systemic autoimmune disease and is associated with a number of extra-articular organ manifestations, including ocular complications.

Objectives: The aim of this study is to evaluate the frequency and characteristics of ocular manifestation in patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Methods: The study involved 87 patients with RA. All the study subjects underwent complete ophthalmological examination including visual acuity assessment, examination of anterior and posterior eye segments, Schirmer’s test, diameter and motility pupils, as well as eyeball mobility assessment of intracocular pressure. Data regarding age, gender, disease duration, age at diagnosis, systemic corticosteroid use, blood pressure, ocular symptoms and detailed ophthalmic history were recorded. The presence of rheumatoid factor in serum was evaluated by standard test methods based on principle of agglutination. All patients were seropositive.

Results: 67 patients (26 male, 59 female, mean age 45.6 ± 13.1 years; mean disease duration 7.4 ± 6.2 years) with RA were enrolled in this study. 31 (35.63 %) of them had no ocular symptoms. Among the patients with ocular symptoms, 39 (69.64 %) complained of decreased vision, 33 (58.93 %) - of dry eye, 32 (57.14 %) - of burning, 29 (51.78 %) -photophobia, 28 (50 %) - of gritty sensation, 27 (48.21 %) - of itching, 18 (32.14 %) - of redness, 13 (23.21 %) - of ocular pain, 3 (5.36 %) - of floaters. Ophthalmological examination revealed higher incidence of the following abnormalities in the study group: myopic astigmatism - in 10 (5.74 %) eyes, vascular abnormalities within fundus - in 22 (12.64 %) eyes, increased intraocular pressure (> 21 mm Hg) - in 11 (6.32 %) eyes. Mean IOP values were 17.34 ± 5.12 mm Hg. In 48 eyes Schirmer’s test results were below 10 mm, and in 18 eyes - below 5 mm. Keratoconjunctivitis sicca was present in 31 (35.63 %) of all patients. Episcleritis was diagnosed in 4 patients (4.6%), scleritis – in 3 (3.45 %), Retinal vasculitis was present in 2 (2.3 %) patients and involves veins and arteries peripheral branches. Lens opacity was found in 13 (14.94 %) patients (21 eyes), mostly in the form of posterior subcapsular cataract (in 16 eyes) and nuclear cataract (in 5 eyes). The mean age of patients with cataracts was 52.3 ± 14.2 years. 13 of the patients with cataracts were either currently taking or had previously taken systemic corticosteroids.

Conclusion: In patients with RA numerous abnormalities within the vision of organ may be found. Ocular symptoms are relatively common complications of RA, and may result in irreversible changes in the organ of vision. Regular ophthalmological examinations are essential among the patients with RA.

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