Oropharyngeal Syphilis among HIV-Infected Patients

Yuria Ablanedo-Terrazas, MD; Claudia Alvarado-de la Barrera, PhD; Matilde Ruiz-Cruz, MD; Gustavo Reyes-Terán, MD
Centro de Investigación en Enfermedades Infecciosas, Instituto Nacional de Enfermedades Respiratorias “Ismael Cosío Villegas”, Mexico City

ABSTRACT

There has been a re-emergence of syphilis among men who have sex with men (MSM) over the last decade. In recent years, there have been increased numbers of co-infections of HIV and syphilis in the United States, and an overall increase in the number of syphilis cases has been reported. Our study was aimed at describing oropharyngeal manifestations of secondary syphilis in HIV-infected patients. We also sought to determine the clinical risk factors for the development of oropharyngeal syphilitic lesions in patients with HIV and secondary syphilis.

RESULTS

A total of 31 HIV-infected patients were diagnosed with syphilis during the period between October 2009 and February 2012. Of those, 17 had tertiary neurosyphilis (a reactive serologic test for other syphilis stage with clinical and imaging features consistent with neurosyphilis); 11 had secondary syphilis. Among them, 14 (45.2%) had lesions in the oropharynx, and 17 (54.7%) had lesions in the skin. Secondary syphilis is associated with a higher frequency of mucosal lesions and a more aggressive clinical course. Tertiary syphilis is divided into three stages: primary, secondary, and late (2001 and 2006, an overall increase from 3.0 to 5.7 cases per 100,000 population was observed among men in the United States.

DISCUSSION

This study was aimed at describing oropharyngeal manifestations of secondary syphilis in HIV-infected patients. We also sought to determine the clinical risk factors for the development of oropharyngeal syphilitic lesions in patients with HIV and secondary syphilis. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first comparative study reporting oropharyngeal manifestations of syphilis in HIV-infected patients, as only case reports and case series have been published.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study was conducted at the Infectious Diseases Research Center of the National Institute of Respiratory Diseases (INER), a tertiary referral center in Mexico City. The eligible subjects for this study were HIV-infected patients who had been diagnosed and treated for syphilis between May 2008 and February 2012. Cases were defined as those patients with a medical history and compatible with secondary syphilis, appearance of characteristic mucosal oropharyngeal lesions with or without skin lesions. Controls were defined as those patients with a medical history and compatible with secondary syphilis, appearance of characteristic mucosal oropharyngeal lesions with or without skin lesions. The study was approved by the Ethics Review Committee of INER.

CONTACT

Yuria Ablanedo-Terrazas
Centro de Investigación en Enfermedades Infecciosas
Email: yuria.ablanedo@cieni.org
Phone: 52 55 5735 1655
Website: cieni.org.mx

REFERENCES


CONCLUSIONS

Syphilis infection in HIV-infected men was associated with oropharyngeal syphilis in a significant number of patients. Due to the overlap in syphilis stages, a multidisciplinary approach is required to reduce morbidity in these patients.

Figure 1. Macular patches
Figure 2. Scrotal tongue
Figure 3. Mucosal plaque
Figure 4. Papulosquamous syphilids
Figure 5. Papulonodular lesions
Figure 6. Mucopolypular lesions