



AUTOIMMUNE BULLOUS DISEASES

EFFICACY OF RITUXIMAB IN PEMPHIGUS IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY: A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

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Introduction: Rituximab represents a promising therapy in pemphigus; however, an optimal dose or a specific treatment scheme has not been established.

Objective: This study aims to evaluate the efficacy of rituximab in pemphigus in an Ecuadorian Hospital.

Materials and Methods: This is an observational, retrospective study. All patients with pemphigus treated with rituximab since 2008 were included. In several patients, B cells were counted in Facscant II flow cytometry equipment; data were processed with the SPSS statistical program.

Results: 28 cases were found with a mean age of 56 years-old and a diagnosis time of 6,7 years. Pemphigus vulgaris was prevalent with 61%, azathioprine and corticoids were used before biologics in more than 70%. The most used scheme was the C (500 mg and repeated in 15 days) and a maintenance dose of 500 mg every 6 months for all the schemes, 90% had a complete remission in a mean time of 3,5 months with group C being the fastest with 2.6 months. The duration of treatment had a mean of 33 months. About 70% received concomitant treatment with corticosteroids and immunosuppressive therapy, mostly with azathioprine. In 15 patients with B cell counts, the mean was 106 cells/mm³.

Conclusions: No difference was found in the rates of complete remission and the time to get it between the different schemes. There were no relapses of the disease presumably due to the maintenance frequency of 6 months and the use of concomitant therapies. The treatment duration reaches up to 8 years without mention of notable adverse effects; therefore it could represent a long-term safety. The use of B-cell count could be used as a tool to decide the withdrawal or frequency of the maintenance dose; however studies to define the cut-off point at which relapses appear are necessary.

