



HAIR DISORDERS

AZATHIOPRINE IN COMBINATION WITH METHOTREXATE: A THERAPEUTIC ALTERNATIVE IN SEVERE AND RECALCITRANT FORMS OF ALOPECIA AREATA?

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Introduction: Alopecia areata(AA) is an autoimmune disease resulting in partial or total non-scarring hair loss. Treatment of recalcitrant forms is difficult, with limited options for second or third lines.

Objective: The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the combination therapy azathioprine(AZA) plus methotrexate(MTX) for recalcitrant forms of AA, as already experienced in atopic dermatitis by our team.

Materials and Methods: 18 patients were collected from January 2011 to March 2018 ,15 women(83%), with at least a 6 months history of AA and a failure to a first line of systemic therapy, including pulsed methylprednisolone plus MTX (medium dose 20mg). Median age at the beginning of intervention was 23 years(IQR:10-43). 9 had severe multifocal AA (MAA) and 9 had alopecia totalis(AT). Thiopurine-methyltransferase genotype was realized before starting AZA. AZA was started systematically low at 50 mg/d and progressively increased according to regrowth and tolerance in combination with MTX 15-25 mg/week subcutaneously. A Simplified Global Score(SGS) was used: 0=no change, 1≤50%, 2≥50%-99%, 3=100% of hair regrowth at 6 months and at 1 year of treatment.

Results: After 6 months treatment hair regrowth was present in 10 of 18 patients(55.5%), with SGS=1 in 8 patients and SGS=2 in 2 patients. At 1 year SGS was 1 in 4 patients, 2 in 2 patients and 3 in 3 patients, indicating hair regrowth in 50% of patients and 9 of 18 patients(50%) continued AZA/MTX, while the other patients stopped treatment. Among the latter group of patients 5 stopped for no efficacy and 4 stopped for no efficiency and side effects (3 gastro-intestinal and 1 lymphopenia).

Conclusion: Combined AZA/MTX can be considered as rescue treatment in a subgroup of





non-responder forms of AA . Further controlled studies are needed to demonstrate the long-term efficacy and safety of this innovative approach.

