



MEDICAL THERAPIES AND PHARMACOLOGY

OUR EXPERIENCE WITH RITUXIMAB IN THE TREATMENT OF PEMPHIGUS AT A TERTIARY CARE HOSPITAL IN SOUTH INDIA.

T Vaidya⁽¹⁾

Father Muller Medical College, Department Of Dermatology, Mangalore, India⁽¹⁾

Introduction: Rituximab is a chimeric monoclonal antibody targeted against CD20. It acts by destruction of autoreactive B cells. It is a common biologic agent widely used for the treatment of B-cell lymphoma, lymphoproliferative disorders, and inflammatory conditions that are refractory to conventional treatment, such as rheumatoid arthritis, etc. However, various recent studies have shown an increasing number of serious adverse events associated with the use of rituximab, such as serious, often fatal, infusion reactions, infections, rigors, fever, peripheral oedema, hypertension, myelosuppression, elevated transaminases, cardiac failure etc. Very few such studies have been performed in Indian patients, where Rituximab is still a very new molecule.

Objective: To assess the efficacy and adverse events profile in patients of Pemphigus treated with Rituximab.

Materials and methods: In this retrospective study, we analysed records of 20 cases of Pemphigus who received the Rheumatoid Arthritis Protocol from January 2016 to June 2018, at Father Muller Hospital, Mangalore, India; for the efficacy of Rituximab as well as for the immediate and late adverse effects encountered with the use of Rituximab.

Results: We found that 50% of cases achieved complete remission for the entire duration of follow up. The mean duration of remission was 8.55 months. More than 75% of patients relapsed only after 6 months. Twelve patients (60%) had various infusion reactions such as fever, chills, giddiness, breathlessness, bradycardia and cyanosis. 30% of the patients developed late side effects such as onychomycosis and sepsis. One of the patients died due to sepsis.

Conclusion: Hence we conclude that Rituximab, although a highly efficacious wonder drug, must be used with caution, keeping in mind these catastrophic side effects.

