TROPICAL DERMATOLOGY

LEPROSY: A 19-YEAR REVIEW (1998-2017) IN A STATE GENERAL HOSPITAL IN PENINSULA MALAYSIA

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Introduction: Leprosy, an infectious disease caused by Mycobacterium leprae, is an important cause of preventable disability. Despite leprosy having been eliminated in Malaysia since 1994, new cases of leprosy continue to be notified, including in the state of Pahang, which has one of the highest number of patients with leprosy in the country, affecting predominantly the indigenous population.

Objective: Recognizing the various types and complications among patients with leprosy may help strategize local treatment policies while aiming to eradicate the disease altogether from the local population.

Materials and Methods: This is a 19-year, single-centre, retrospective audit of new patients with leprosy who attended the Dermatology clinic in Hospital Tengku Ampuan Afzan (HTAA), Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia, the state general hospital, between 1998 and 2017.

Results: Out of 94 afflicted individuals, 63% were men. The median age of patients was 34 years and 37.2% were aged between 21 and 40 years. Ten patients (10.6%) were below the age of 15. The great majority of these patients were indigenous peoples (70%). The predominant type of leprosy was multibacillary (74%) and 14% had Grade 2 deformity upon diagnosis. Two patients had died, both from fulminant hepatic failure secondary to dapsone hypersensitivity syndrome. A third of the patients (33.0%) were from the district of Pekan. This is followed by the districts of Rompin (19.2%), Muadzam (13.8%), Kuantan (11.7%) and Jengka (5.3%). There was no difference between gender and type of leprosy (p=0.134), grade 2 deformity (p=0.08) and lepra reaction (p=0.07).

Conclusions: New cases of leprosy continue to be reported in the state of Pahang, mainly among the indigenous peoples. Many present with grade 2 deformity, which is readily preventable with early detection and treatment.