AUTOIMMUNE BULLOUS DISEASES

AN INDIAN EXPERIENCE OF DISEASE PERSISTENCE AND RELAPSES IN PEMPHIGUS AND PEMPHIGOID FOLLOWING RITUXIMAB (BIOSIMILAR) THERAPY.

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Introduction: Rituximab approval by USFDA has raised the bar of hope for the dreaded autoimmune disease of pemphigus vulgaris. Cost being a major limitation, biosimilars provided an alternative in the Indian set up. Our experience with Rituximab in 15 patients of pemphigus vulgaris(PV) and bullous pemphigoid(BP) who were failing other immunosuppressive therapy at a tertiary care centre in Mumbai over the last 2 years is hereby shared.

Objective: To assess the clinical efficacy of Rituximab biosimilar as an adjuvant and to look at relapses/failures.

Material and Methods: 12 patients of PV and 3 patients of BP failing to be adequately treated with conventional Immunosuppressive drugs were admitted in wards. All cases were assessed for clinical severity, scored, and subjected to histopathology, direct immunofluoroscence and ELISA test. Patients were treated with Inj Rituximab 375 mg/m2 per week for 4 doses in addition to continuation of the other immunosuppressive drugs. All patients were followed up every month for assessing disease activity, complete remission and relapse. Data was analyzed retrospectively.

Results: 14/15 (93%) showed complete remission while 1 case of BP continued to have persistent disease activity. Average time for remission was 5 months. 4/15 (27%) patients relapsed at 3,5,8 and 10 months respectively.

Conclusions: Rituximab biosimilar are highly effective adjuvants to conventional immunosuppressive treatments in severe PV and BP. However, a relapse rate of 27% warrants further experiences with this molecule.