Minocycline-induced Acute Generalized Exanthematous Pustulosis in a Patient with Generalized Pustular Psoriasis Showing Elevated Level of sELAM-1

Sir,

We here describe a case of acute generalized exanthematous pustulosis (AGEP) by minocycline in a patient with generalized pustular psoriasis (GPP), well controlled by etretinate.

A 52-year-old female with GPP was being followed-up as an outpatient. Eight years previously, generalized pustulation with arthralgia of her shoulders and lumbar had occurred following a throat infection, which later developed into erythroderma. After admission, her lesions improved after treatment with etretinate (40 mg/day), which proved to be an effective therapy, and the symptoms gradually subsided. She then complained of a sicca condition and was examined by Shirmer test (r; 3 mm, l; 4 mm), gum test (8 ml/10 min) and lip biopsy (grade III), which demonstrated the presence of Sjögren’s syndrome. Keratoconjunctivitis Sicca was not noted. Antinuclear antibody was positive at a titer of 1:80 (speckled), but rheumatoid factor, anti-RNP, anti-SS-A and SS-B antibodies were all negative. Afterwards her GPP was well controlled with etretinate 10 mg/day. However, in July 1995, she developed several folliculitis-like papules limited to the perioral area, and minocycline (100 mg/day) was administered. Three hours after the patient had taken minocycline, erythroderma with numerous superficial pustules developed over her body (Fig. 1) and she developed a fever of 39°C. Culture of the pustule was sterile. She stated that similar systemic pustulation had occurred 5 years previously, and old clinical records also revealed that minocycline, which had been administered for folliculitis (200 mg/day), had induced generalized pustulation on the 7th day of administration. Laboratory examination revealed normal blood cell counts, deviating serum GOT, GPT, LDH, γ-GTP, AI-P, T-Bil levels, an elevated erythrocyte sedimentation rate, and positive C-reactive protein. A drug lymphocyte stimulation test was positive (stimulation index: 465%). Serum cytokine levels of interleukin-2 (IL-2), IL-6, IL-8, tumor necrosis factor-α (TNF-α), and endothelial-leukocyte adhesion molecule-1 (ELAM-1) were measured by radioimmunoassay (IL-2, Amersham) and ELISA (IL-6, Fuji; IL-8, Toray; TNF-α, Otsuka; ELAM-1, R&D). As shown in Table I, on the 3rd day from onset, IL-6 was 22.9 pg/ml (normal, 10 pg/ml), IL-8 was 19.2 pg/ml (normal <10 pg/ml), and ELAM-1 demonstrated 400 ng/ml (normal, 29.1–63.4 ng/ml); however, IL-2 and TNF-α were both within normal ranges. After the minocycline treatment had been stopped, spontaneous rapid resolution of the pustules was observed within 10 days. The elevated liver enzyme levels then decreased gradually. A patch test of 10% minocycline, which was performed on the patient’s back after remission, showed pustules (the vehicle was negative and 10% minocycline was also negative in the normal controls). After 18 days, the serum cytokine levels examined had all decreased to the normal ranges. The patient remained on etretinate 10 mg/day throughout the course.

Drug-induced GPP is a well-described phenomenon, and numerous case reports implicating drug exposure to be the cause of GPP have been published. Recently, a few cases with a severe hypersensitivity reaction developing into pustulation have been reported to be caused by minocycline (1). However, to our knowledge, minocycline has not previously been reported to induce GPP. Tsankov et al. (2) advocate that tetracyclines should be avoided in patients with psoriasis, because they can occasionally exacerbate psoriasis. Our case demonstrated that minocycline caused well-controlled GPP to develop into AGEP. One reason may be that our patient also had the complication of Sjögren’s syndrome, which occasionally develops drug eruptions (3). AGEP usually occurs following either drug ingestion or viral infection (4). A few cases of AGEP induced by cyclines have been previously reported (4, 5). In our case, positive DLST test, patch test and accidental rechallenge test all confirmed minocycline to be the causative drug for the generalized pustular eruptions. Spontaneous rapid resolution within 10 days, with transient elevated serum liver enzyme levels, indicated that the symptoms were due to AGEP in a patient with GPP, and not an exacerbation of GPP. Recently, Spencer et al. (6) observed generalized pustular eruption after drug administration. They believe pustular drug eruption to be a distinct entity, different from GPP. The absence of any personal or family history of psoriasis, the spontaneous resolution without therapy, the presence of eosinophils in the inflammatory infiltrates and the absence of any histological features of conventional psoriasis all suggest pustular drug eruptions to represent a distinct entity.

In our case, the serum cytokine levels of IL-6 and IL-8 were also elevated. IL-8 strongly attracts both neutrophils and lymphocytes. Furthermore, it is of note that a markedly elevated level of serum ELAM-1 was demonstrated at the beginning of systemic pustulation, which thereafter decreased rapidly in parallel with the clinical improvement in this case. ELAM-1 is thought to mediate the adherence of neutrophils.
to endothelial cells and thus accounts for the migration of the cells from the blood-stream to the epidermis, which may have played a crucial role in the formation of pustulation in our case. Sagawa et al. (7) reported that an elevated serum level of TNF-α is maintained in the pustular stage, which explains such clinical symptoms in GPP as fever and leukocytosis. TNF-α induces endothelial cells to express ELAM-1 (8). In our case, however, TNF-α was observed within the normal range. The reason for this discrepancy, however, is unknown. Recently, an elevated level of circulating ELAM-1 has been reported in erythrodermic skin diseases, including psoriasis (9). The significantly high level of serum ELAM-1 detected in our case may have been due to erythrodermic condition.

REFERENCES

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Spontaneous Photo-onycholysis in a West Indian with Type V Skin*

Sir,
Numerous drugs have occasionally been incriminated as causing photo-onycholysis. Three different clinical varieties of drug-induced photo-onycholysis have been described (1). In all of them, the lateral margins of the affected nails are never involved in the process. In contrast to drug-induced photo-onycholysis, which most commonly occurs with the use of tetracyclines or psoralens, both with natural sunlight and with artificial light sources in psoralens and ultraviolet A, spontaneous photo-onycholysis is an unusual condition (2-4).

CASE REPORT
A 39-year-old mechanical engineer of West Indian origin presented with isolated onycholysis of the first three fingers of each hand (Fig. 1), with sparing of the lateral margins of the involved nail plates; this onycholysis was preceded by subungual pain. The toenails were spared (the subject always wore shoes). According to the patient, this nail dystrophy had appeared every July since his arrival in France, 18 years previously. He also developed a recurrence one December when he returned to his native Martinique.

Investigations revealed a normal full blood count, liver function tests, blood urine and stool porphyrins, and antibody screen including ANF.

Protein electrophoresis, serum iron and pyridoxine did not show any abnormalities. The patient did not receive any medication.

Cutaneous phototesting of the patient, an Afro-Caribbean with type V skin, demonstrated an MED to UVB of 72 ml/cm², and immediate pigment darkening (IPD) to UVA at 6 J/cm², which was normal. Irradiation tests were also performed on different finger nails with UBV (150 ml/cm²) and UVA (60 J/cm²); both failed to repro-


duce onycholysis. The radiation source was Osram Xenon lamps 2,500 W and metal halide UVA lamp.

In an ideal case the following investigations would be indicated, that is provocation using repeated UVA radiation to the nail plate during the period of May and June, (before the onset of the recurrent photo-onycholysis).

Trimming of the distal portion of the nail plate of the right third finger showed keratin dust, an aspect identical to that already described in the trimmed nails of patients presenting with drug-induced photo-onycholysis.

The nail matrix biopsy demonstrated melanin granules forming dark columns and keratinocytes containing non-aggregated melanosomes (of negroid type), along with keratinocytes containing rapidly digested melanosome complexes (as observed in Caucasians) (Fig. 2).

Fig. 1. Photo-onycholysis of both thumbs.

Acta Derm Venereol (Stockh) 77