A cross-sectional study of Multiple Sclerosis in a Tertiary care Hospital in Southern India

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INTRODUCTION

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic inflammatory demyelinating disorder of the central nervous system occurring worldwide. It is believed to be an autoimmune disorder with variability in frequency, severity and chronicity. Optic nerve and spinal cord involvement are more common in the Asian variety of MS.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in Inpatient and Outpatient Departments of Neurology, Coimbatore Government Medical College and Hospital, Tamilnadu. Totally 40 patients with varying clinical presentation were analyzed. Relevant investigations were done to diagnose MS and to exclude other MS mimicking conditions. Complete hemogram, X-ray chest, erythrocyte sedimentation rate, blood chemistry comprising of kidney function test, blood sugars, collagen vascular profile, venereal disease research laboratory, and sarcoidosis profile were studied. Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) for oligoclonal bands (OCBs), visual evoked potentials and brainstem auditory evoked response were done in some cases. MRI brain was done in all cases and MRI spinal cord in most of the cases. The cases were diagnosed according to Poser's diagnostic criteria (Table 1). No case of Devic's disease was included in the study.

RESULTS

The patients enrolled in the study were categorized as definite or probable MS. The mean age of onset was 33.5 years in males and 26.40 years in females. The youngest patient was 18 years and the oldest 55 years of age. Maximum number of cases was found in the second and third decade. Male: female ratio was 1:1.57. Most of the patients were between second and third decade. Definite MS comprised of 64%, while remaining 36% were clinically probable. Visual involvement was seen in 40%, weakness of limbs (35%), sphincter involvement (20%), sensory symptoms (10%) and trigeminal neuralgia (10%) were the most common presenting symptoms. Pyramidal tract involvement (70%), spinthalamic and posterior column involvement (50%), cerebellar (25%), optic nerve (20%), internuclear ophthalmoplegia (8%), and optical involvement (12%) were common signs. Relapsing and remitting MS was found (72%), secondary progressive MS (20%) and primary progressive MS (8%) cases. Magnetic resonance imaging brain showed positive results in 60% cases. Cerebrospinal fluid was positive for oligoclonal bands in 8% of cases. Visual evoked potentials and brainstem auditory evoked response were positive in 20% and 16% of cases respectively.

CONCLUSION: Findings in this study revealed that the clinical profile of MS in Southern Tamilnadu was similar to that in other parts of the India and Asia.

KEYWORDS: Internuclear ophthalmoplegia, Multiple sclerosis, Oligoclonal bands
DISCUSSION

MS is less common in tropical countries. Epidemiological data are unavailable. Existing data have been obtained from small often retrospective studies from different parts of the country. Consideration of illness as insignificant by the patients or reluctance on the part of treating doctor to consider the diagnosis of MS because of low frequency may be contributory for reported lower incidence. The present study has documented female to male ratio of 1:1.5. Five studies have shown male preponderance (range 1.25-2), and one study has shown female preponderance. Kurtzke et al. have shown female predominance (female: male - 1.8:1) among US veterans. Sahraian et al. reported in Iran that mean age of onset was similar to other studies but the calculated prevalence of early onset MS was increased. The cumulative data indicate that the female to male ratio is increasing annually. Börü et al. reported that clinical features and course of MS patients in Turkey were typical of European MS. Turkey is a high-risk MS area. The present study has shown similar clinical features and course. A possible explanation could be enhanced diagnosis of MS with MRI, revised MacDonald criteria, increasing number of neurologists and increasing younger population, etc. Orton et al. reported that substantial increase in the female to male sex ratio in Canada seems to result from a disproportional increase in the incidence of MS in women.

Koch-Henriksen and Sørensen reported that in even distribution of MS across populations can be attributed to differences in genes and the environment and their inter-relationship. Cerreta reported that MRI findings have proved to be useful diagnostic test in the initial evaluation and monitoring of patients with MS. It provides quantitative assessment of the disease and progression during clinical trials. The present study also revealed MRI positivity insignificant number of patients and this diagnostic entity has revolutionized the diagnosis of MS. Pugliatti et al. reported prevalence rates are higher for women for all countries considered. Highest prevalence rates have been estimated from the age group 35-64 years for both sexes and all countries. Singhal and Wadia in their study of 30 patients from the Bombay region observed that MS patients were mostly from higher socio-economic status. The present study revealed patients belonging to different social strata. Heydarpour et al. reported that recent advances in MS registries will allow nationwide studies and temporal comparisons between countries provided that age and sex standardized estimates are available.

CONCLUSION

There was a greater preponderance of women as seen worldwide. However clinical pattern conforms more to the “Asian variety” of MS. MRI positivity was lesser as compared to western series. The OCBs in CSF were less seen than in other Asian and western countries.

REFERENCES