DO WE NEED IMMUNOBIOLOGIC DRUGS FOR TREATING AUTOIMMUNE ANTERIOR UVEITIS IN A TERTIARY REFERRAL CENTER?

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BACKGROUND

This work aimed to evaluate the use of immunobiological drugs in autoimmune anterior uveitis in patients referred by rheumatologists and ophthalmologists to an autoimmune ocular disease clinic.

METHODS

Retrospective chart analysis of autoimmune acute anterior uveitis cases referred to a rheumatology-ophthalmology collaborative unit between January 2010 and January 2021. This unit receives cases almost exclusively referred by other ophthalmologists, mainly from a uveitis unit, or by other rheumatologists. This study was approved by Hospital das Clínicas of the Faculdade de Medicina de Ribeirão Preto Ethics Committee.

RESULTS

Forty patients were identified and studied. The majority were women ($n = 24$, 60%), with a mean age of 44.8 years old ($SD = 16$). Many patients had no identifiable underlying systemic disease ($n = 21$, 52.5%). Ten (25%) of the cases were secondary to either ankylosing spondylitis or undifferentiated spondyloarthritis. Other associated conditions were rheumatoid arthritis ($n = 2$, 5.0%), juvenile idiopathic arthritis ($n = 5$, 12.5%), reactive arthritis ($n = 1$, 2.5%) and psoriatic arthritis ($n = 1$, 2.5%). Twenty-seven (67.5%) of the patients presented no sign of disease activity at the time of the latest evaluation (median remission period in months 14.5, IQR 0–27.5). Of these, 19 patients (70.3%) had received synthetic disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (sDMARD), most commonly methotrexate ($n = 15$, 78.9%) and sulfasalazine ($n = 6$, 31.6%), and 14 (73.7%) used sDMARD only. Still in the remission group, only 7 (25.9%) used immunobiological drugs, 3 (42.8%) of which had strictly articular disease activity as drug indication. The most commonly used immunobiological drugs were TNF-alpha antagonists, mainly adalimumab ($n = 5$, 71.4%). Seven (17.5%) patients of the general group did not receive any systemic treatment and were referred for etiological investigation only.

CONCLUSION

Despite the current interest in the role of immunobiological drugs in acute anterior uveitis, in a highly selected sample of mostly refractory cases such as the presented in this study, only 25.9% of patients needed immunobiologics to achieve remission.

KEYWORDS

Uveitis, Immunosuppression, Biologic agents.