LUPUS NEPHRITIS PREVALENCE AND COMPARISON OF CLINICAL/IMMUNOLOGICAL FINDINGS BETWEEN LUPUS PATIENTS WITH AND WITHOUT NEPHRITIS

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BACKGROUND

Renal involvement is a common manifestation in systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) occurring at any time and considered a predictor of poor prognosis. The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of nephritis and to compare clinical and immunological findings among lupus patients with and without nephritis.

METHODS

A cross-sectional, retrospective, descriptive and observational study was carried out between January 2017 to May 2019. Seventy-seven medical records of patients with SLE were analyzed. Student's t-test for independent samples was used to compare quantitative variables and Pearson's chi-squared test or Fisher's exact test was used to compare qualitative variables. Values of $p \leq 0.05$ were considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

Seventy females and 7 males were analyzed. The prevalence of nephritis was 55.8% ($n = 43$). The mean age at SLE onset and the mean disease duration were 42.1 ± 12.0 years old and 11.1 ± 8.0 years, respectively in patients without nephritis and 37.4 ± 12.7 years old and 11.1 ± 8.0 years, respectively in patients with nephritis. There was a predominance of females in both groups, 91.3% without nephritis and 90.7% with nephritis. There was no significant difference regarding age, sex and time since diagnosis between patients with or without nephritis. The most common symptoms were arthralgia (88.2% without nephritis vs. 88.4% with nephritis; $p = 1.000$), arthritis (67.6% without nephritis vs. 69.8% with nephritis; $p = 0.842$), photosensitivity (73.5% without nephritis vs. 76.7% with nephritis; $p = 0.745$), malar erythema (61.8% without nephritis vs. 62.9% with nephritis; $p = 0.926$) and alopecia (50.0% without nephritis vs. 55.8% with nephritis; $p = 0.612$). There were statistically significant differences between patients with and without nephritis regarding the presence of systemic arterial hypertension (55.8% vs 23.5%; $p = 0.004$). The most common laboratory findings were: ANA (97.1% without nephritis vs. 95.1% with nephritis; $p = 1.000$), anti-DNA (46.2% without nephritis vs. 75% with nephritis; $p = 0.017$) and low C3 (55.1% without nephritis vs. 74.4% with nephritis; $p = 0.139$) and low C4 (60.7% without nephritis vs 71.1% with nephritis; $p = 0.379$).

CONCLUSION

Systemic arterial hypertension and anti-DNA were prevalent manifestations in patients with lupus nephritis and should be closely monitored and treated, due to the increased risk of complications for this group of patients.

KEYWORDS

Systemic lupus erythematosus, Lupus nephritis, Renal involvement, SLE.