HEP-19

THE CLINICAL INVESTIGATION OF AUTOIMMUNE HEPATITIS IN TAIWAN

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BACKGROUND/AIMS: Autoimmune hepatitis (AIH) is a chronic inflammatory liver disease that is rare in Asian countries compared with western countries, and there was previously limited experience on the clinical study of AIH patients in Taiwan. By using the diagnostic criteria of IAIHG, we diagnosed 48 cases of AIH patients in a period of 5 years.

METHODS: The detailed medical history, clinical manifestations, results of steroid therapy and survival rates were investigated and analyzed. The clinical data of AIH patients with cirrhosis and without cirrhosis were compared. The statistical methods used were Fisher's exact test, Wilcoxon Rank Sum test and Kaplan-Meier curve.

RESULTS: 48 patients were diagnosed as AIH type 1, median age 58 years, female-male ratio 37:11. 46% had an insidious onset, 42% had an acute onset and 12% were asymptomatic. Common clinical features were fatigue (60%) and jaundice (56%). 98%of patients were ANA positive with abnormal levels of AST (92%), bilirubin (77%) and IgG (73%). 50% of cases were associated with HLA-DQ5. 35% of patients had liver cirrhosis, with relatively prolonged PT (p=0.001), decreased albumin (p=0.001), high ANA level (480 versus 80, p=0.003) and poorer outcome (p=0.005) compared with those of the non-cirrhotics. Main histological feature was interface hepatitis (87%). As a whole, there was a favorable treatment response and overall survival rate was 85.4%.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS:

The prevalence of AIH in Taiwan was much higher than previously presumed and AIH type 1 was the predominant type of the disease. HLA-DQ5 seemed to be the HLA-phenotype associated with our AIH patients. 3 types of clinical presentation were noted: insidious onset, acute and asymptomatic. Although a substantial proportion of AIH patients presented with poor hepatic function at entry, there was an overall favorable clinical outcome.

Key words: Autoimmune hepatitis , Antinuclear antibodies, HLA phenotypes