

Thalidomide-induced peripheral neuropathy in children with inflammatory bowel disease

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Objectives and study: Thalidomide is effective in inducing and maintaining remission in children with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) refractory to standard treatments. However long-term thalidomide use may be limited by the development of thalidomide-induced peripheral neuropathy (TPN). Our study aimed to investigate the risk factors and the outcome of TPN in children with IBD.

Methods: Within a retrospective multi-centre cohort study we evaluated prevalence and evolution of TPN in children treated with thalidomide 1.5-2.5 mg/Kg/day and regularly followed-up with clinical and electrophysiological neurological assessment. To detect predisposing factors to TPN, the clinical history of patients who developed TPN and of patients who didn't was compared. Genotyping of variants in *ABCA1* (rs363717), *ICAM1* (rs1799969), *PPARD* (rs2076169), *SERPINB2* (rs6103), and *SLC12A6* (rs7164902) genes, previously associated with TPN, and in *CYP2C19* (rs4244285), which may influence thalidomide conversion to an active metabolite, was performed by TaqMan assays (Thermoscientific).

Results: One hundred forty-two patients were identified: 64% had Crohn's disease, 35% ulcerative colitis and 1% IBD-unclassified. Mean age at thalidomide start was 14 years. TPN was found in 72.5% of patients: 38.7% had clinical and electrophysiological alterations, 26.8% had exclusive electrophysiological anomalies, 7.0% had exclusive neurological symptoms. Median TPN-free period of treatment was 16.5 months; the percentage of TPN-free patients was 70.0% and 35.6% at 12 and 24 months of treatment respectively. TPN was a sensory neuropathy in 75% and a sensorimotor neuropathy in 17% of cases. Symptoms did not interfere with daily activities. TPN was the cause of drug suspension in 41.8% patients. Clinical symptoms resolved in 89.2% of cases while instrumental alteration persisted in more than half of the patients during a short follow-up. Baseline characteristics and previous medical history were not found to be associated with TPN. The risk of TPN increased

depending on the mean daily dose (50-99 mg/day adjusted-Hazard Ratio 2.62 95%CI 1.31-5.21; 100-149 mg/day adj-HR 6.16 95%CI 20.9-13.06; >150 mg/day adj-HR 9.57 95%CI 2.6-35.2). Single nucleotide polymorphisms in *ICAM1* (rs1799969) and *SERPINB2* (rs6103) genes were found to be protective against TPN (OR 0.15 95%CI 0.03-0.82 and 0.36 95%CI 0.14-0.88, respectively).

Conclusion: TPN developed in more than two thirds of children with IBD but was generally mild and reversible during the follow-up. Cumulative dose was the most relevant risk factor for TPN while variants in genes involved in neuronal inflammation were protective.