

ENDOBRONCHIAL TUBERCULOSIS - A CHALLENGE FOR THE BRONCHOLOGIST

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Background: Endobronchial tuberculosis (EBTB) is defined as tuberculous infection of the tracheobronchial tree with microbial and histopathological evidence. It is seen in 10-40% of patients with active pulmonary tuberculosis. Ten to 20 percent have normal chest radiograph. Bronchoscopic sampling has been the key to the diagnosis producing more than 90% yield on smear as well as on culture.

Aims: Frequency evaluation of EBTB and lessional profile of bronchial tuberculosis in correlation with radiological and clinical findings, illustrating the peculiarities and endobronchial aspects of some cases we encountered.

Methods: From a total of 9800 examined patients in the Bronchology Departament of Pneumology Hospital Cluj-Napoca between 2009-2013, a number of 277 patients (2,83%) had clinical and radiological aspects of pulmonary tuberculosis but with negative sputum or unable to expectorate. Bronchial lavage (BL) was performed for Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB) detection in all patients. Infiltrative ulcerative and vegetant endobronchial lesions were biopsied.

Results: Bacteriological exam of BL confirmed tuberculosis in 179 patients with a 64,6 % confirmation rate: 61 patients (34,07%) with positive MTB culture and positive acid fast bacilli (AFB) microscopy, 118 patients (65,92%) only with positive MTB culture. Endoscopic macroscopic aspects: hyperemic edematous forms - 60 cases (33,5%), infiltrative ulcerative - 45 cases(25,1%), vegetant forms - 30 cases(16,7%), normal aspects - 44 cases(24,5%). Out of 35 biopsies performed, histologic diagnosis of tuberculosis was possible in 22 cases with 62.85% confirmation rate. We found correlation between endoscopic and radiologic aspects: hyperemic edematous forms and infiltrative tuberculosis, respectively between infiltrative ulcerative forms and cavitary / ulcerative tuberculosis.

Conclusions: Bronchoscopy with BL and bronchial biopsy can improve the yield diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis and should be used in suggestive clinical and radiological cases of tuberculosis and negative sputum.