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PAP-TEST FEATURES IN A COHORT OF SYSTEMIC SCLEROSIS PATIENTS

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Background: Increased incidence of malignancies was frequently reported in systemic sclerosis (SSc), as well as for other autoimmune diseases. Besides the previously observed association with lung cancer¹ and the increased risk for breast cancer², no association with cancer of the cervix has been described in literature. However, cervical uterus malignancy is one of the most frequent cancer in women so that public health programs of screening have been established in several countries worldwide. In Italy, the pap cytology test is recommended every 3 years for all women between 25 and 64 years old.

Objectives: To investigate pap-test features in SSc patients.

Methods: We retrospectively evaluated a cohort of 80 consecutive female SSc patients (mean age 51.2±12SD years, disease duration 7.9±5.8SD years, limited/diffuse skin subsets 72/8), who underwent to pap cytology tests as screening for cancer of the cervix, during the period between January 1st, 2008 and December 31th, 2014. All patients came from the same geographical area (province of Modena, Northern Italy). Clinical, serological, and instrumental data of SSc patients were collected and related to cytological findings.

Results: At gynaecological and pap test evaluations, 55 (68.7%) patients were negative, while 20 (25%) presented inflammatory alterations (i.e. chronic cervicitis); while atypical cells related to cancer or pre-cancerous lesions were found in 5 (6.2%) cases. Namely, 2 women showed cervix cancer (one of them in situ), 1 a vulvar melanoma, 1 a vulvar intraepithelial neoplasia, and 1 an endocervical polyp with immature squamous metaplasia at histology.

The frequency of cervix cancer in our series seems to be clearly higher in comparison to the incidence registered in the same geographical area and in the same years (standardized rate 8, 95%IC 5.2-10.7 cases out of 100,000 subjects).

At statistical analysis, the atypical cytological findings correlated with serum anti-Scl70 autoantibodies (4/5 vs. 19/75; p=0.022); moreover, the patients with these alterations tended to be older (median 65, range 46-67), if compared to the whole series (p=0.052). No statistical correlations with skin or visceral involvements, smoking history, treatment with immunosuppressors were found.

Conclusions: In our SSc patients' series, we found a relatively high frequency of cancerous lesions of the cervix by means of pap test. A significant correlation with anti-Scl70 autoantibodies was also found. These preliminary findings need to be verified in larger controlled epidemiological studies.

References:

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