Short- and long-term outcomes of 34 patients with drug-induced hypersensitivity syndrome in a single institution

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Background: Drug-induced hypersensitivity syndrome (DIHS)/drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS) is a severe systemic hypersensitivity reaction caused by specific drugs, in which herpesvirus reactivations and organ dysfunction occur during the course of the disease. Although recent reports have documented the development of autoimmune disease after complete resolution of DIHS/DRESS, relatively little is known about long-term outcomes after complete resolution of the disease.

Objective: The aim of this study was to retrospectively analyze complications and sequelae in the early and late phases of DIHS/DRESS according to treatment.

Methods: In all, 34 patients were classified into 2 groups: 14 patients with oral corticosteroid treatment; and 20 with noncorticosteroid treatment. The disease time course was divided into 2 periods: the first 6 months after onset of the drug reaction (early phase); and the period thereafter (late phase). Investigations to detect the presence of viral/bacterial infectious diseases, organ dysfunction, and autoantibodies were performed in both early and late phases.

Results: Herpesvirus infections and pneumonia were detected in 6 and 2 patients, respectively, in the corticosteroid treatment group in the early phase. In the noncorticosteroid treatment group, 2 patients developed autoimmune diseases, namely lupus erythematosus and autoimmune thyroiditis. Autoantibodies were detected in 44.4% of patients examined in the late phase of the disease.

Limitations: This study only evaluated a small number of autoantibodies.

Conclusion: The need for anti-inflammatory effects from systemic corticosteroids should be balanced with the risk of infectious diseases and the benefits of preventing the appearance of later autoimmune conditions in patients with DIHS/DRESS. (J Am Acad Dermatol 2013;68:721-8.)

Key words: complication; corticosteroid; drug-induced hypersensitivity syndrome; drug reaction; drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms; herpesvirus; outcome; treatment; viral reactivation.

Drug-induced hypersensitivity syndrome (DIHS)/drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS) is a severe systemic hypersensitivity reaction caused by specific drugs such as anticonvulsants and allopurinol, and is characterized by organ dysfunction and reactivation of human herpesvirus (HHV)-6.[1-3] Reactivation of other herpesvirus, such as Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) and cytomegalovirus (CMV) may occur during the course of this drug reaction.[4-6] Despite the complete recovery from DIHS/DRESS, the development of autoimmune sequelae such as autoimmune

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Supported by Research on Measures for Intractable Diseases Project: matching fund subsidy from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare and by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology.
Conflicts of interest: None declared.
Accepted for publication October 6, 2012.

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Published online November 21, 2012.
0190-9622/$36.00

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jaad.2012.10.017

thyroiditis, sclerodermoid lesions, type 1 diabetes mellitus, and lupus erythematosus has been reported.[7-12] The long-term outcomes of DIHS/DRESS after complete resolution of the disease are unclear, because of a lack of long-term follow-up and the potential development of sequelae after a disease-free period of several months to years. In particular, the relationship between administration of systemic corticosteroids—a common treatment for DIHS/DRESS—and long-term outcome is not well documented.[13,14] Long-term outcomes may be influenced by the type and duration of treatment, herpesvirus reactivation, genetic factors, and the presence of underlying disease. To clarify the relationship between treatment and outcome in DIHS/DRESS, we retrospectively analyzed the complications and sequelae in the early and late phases of the disease in relation to treatments in patients with DIHS/DRESS seen at our institution. This study revealed significant differences in outcomes according to treatment for DIHS/DRESS.

CAPSULE SUMMARY

- Drug-induced hypersensitivity syndrome is a severe systemic hypersensitivity reaction, and involves the reactivation of herpesviruses. Various infections and organ failure can develop during the course of this disease.
- Development of autoimmune diseases and autoantibodies were detected in noncorticosteroid-treated patients after complete resolution of the disease.
- Treatments for drug-induced hypersensitivity syndrome should be carefully selected based on an understanding of the differences in treatment modalities.

METHODS

Patients

This study was approved by the institutional review board of Kyorin University School of Medicine, Tokyo, Japan. The medical records of 40 patients who had been admitted into our hospital for DIHS/DRESS between 1998 and 2010 were reviewed. All patients satisfied the diagnostic criteria for DIHS/DRESS proposed by the Japanese Severe Cutaneous Adverse Reaction Group,[15] and the culprit drug had been discontinued once the diagnosis was suspected. Patients were excluded from further analysis if: they were older than 85 years; significant underlying diseases were present, including heart or renal failure; previous treatment before visiting our hospital was unclear; or if the period of observation and follow-up was less than 1 year after the initiation of treatment in our hospital. After the exclusion of ineligible patients based on the exclusion criteria, 34 of the 40 patients given the diagnosis of DIHS/DRESS were enrolled in the study. Using the RegiSCAR scoring system proposed by Kardaun et al,[16] the 34 cases were classified as either definite or probable.

Patients were classified into 2 groups according to whether they had been treated with oral corticosteroids (corticosteroids, n = 14; noncorticosteroid treatment, n = 20). No other immunosuppressive agents had been administered. The initial oral corticosteroid dose was 0.6 to 1.0 mg/kg daily, after which the dose was gradually tapered. Most patients required more than 8 weeks of oral corticosteroids to achieve complete resolution. Patients who had received less than 0.25 mg/kg daily within 3 days before hospital admission were not included in the oral corticosteroid treatment group. A total of 5 patients in the corticosteroid treatment group had also received intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) therapy, with a dose of 5 g daily administered for 3 to 5 days on detection of herpesvirus reactivation. In the noncorticosteroid treatment group, 3 patients had received IVIG therapy with intravenous fluids. Two patients were given doses of 5 g daily for 3 and 5 days, respectively, and 1 patient who had 1 kidney because of previous excision of a renal tumor was given a dose of 2.5 g daily for 3 days. The other 17 patients were given supportive treatment with intravenous fluids (Fig 1). Some patients received topical corticosteroids for symptomatic relief. The type of treatment selected was based on the clinical judgment of the consulting dermatologist rather than a predetermined treatment algorithm.

The clinical features and culprit drugs in each group are shown in Table I. The respective mean age was 54.5 ± 19.7 and 56.4 ± 15.2 years in the corticosteroid and noncorticosteroid treatment groups. The type of culprit drugs and the presence of underlying disease were not significantly different between the 2 groups. In most patients, eruptions started as erythematous macules that enlarged and became confluent erythematous lesions. Mucosal lesions were present only in 1 patient in the corticosteroid treatment group. Skin biopsy specimens had been obtained from all patients and histopathological examination revealed scattered exocytosis of mononuclear cells in the epidermis and perivascular lymphocytic and eosinophilic infiltration in the papillary dermis in many specimens. Laboratory data including leukocyte and eosinophil counts,