

CUTANEOUS PRESENTATION OF CRYPTOCOCCOSIS IN AIDS. FLUCONAZOLE THERAPY

G. Gaddoni, L. Baldassari, B. Menni and I. Marinucci

ABSTRACT

In patients with AIDS *Cryptococcus neoformans* may cause widespread mycotic infections. Cutaneous involvement usually occurs in the context of diffuse infection. Amphotericin B has been the standard treatment.

We report five cases of HIV-positive patients who presented with early cutaneous manifestations of cryptococcosis. Systemic fluconazole is as successful in the clearance of infection and in maintenance suppressive therapy for cutaneous infection as it is in cryptococcal meningitis.

KEY WORDS

cutaneous cryptococcosis, AIDS, HIV, fluconazole

INTRODUCTION

Cryptococcus neoformans is a ubiquitous yeast present in soil, dust and pigeon excreta. In immunodepressed patients it may be the cause of widespread mycotic infections which are particularly virulent in patients with AIDS (1-5). The incidence of cryptococcal disease in these patients has been estimated to be 6-10% in the United States and Europe. It is the fourth commonest cause of death and mortality ranges from 50-100% (4).

The yeast enters the body through the respiratory system and diffuses into the circulation with particular tropism for the central nervous system. The skin is affected in 10-20% of cases and cutaneous involvement usually occurs in the context of diffuse cryptococcal

infection but may be the presenting feature in patients who are still asymptomatic offering the possibility to make an early diagnosis and initiate treatment (2).

CASE REPORTS

We report five cases of HIV-positive intravenous drug users, three males and two females, who presented with early cutaneous localization of *cryptococcus* which later evolved in systemic cryptococcosis. Cutaneous symptoms were accompanied by slight pyrexia, intense headache and cough. They are part of a group of seventeen patients with systemic cryptococcosis attending the hospital from 1992 to 1994. Haematological and serological values are

