Post-Polio Syndrome Causing Late Onset Respiratory Failure

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Paralytic poliomyelitis was a major cause of morbidity and mortality throughout the world during the first half of the 20th century. With the introduction of effective vaccination in the mid-20th century, the incidence decreased significantly [1]. It is estimated that there are 15–20 million polio survivors worldwide [2]. The most fearsome complication of paralytic-poliomyelitis is respiratory involvement. Approximately 27–36% of the survivors of polio present with respiratory insufficiency [3].

Post-polio syndrome (PPS) occurs in 15-80% of paralytic polio survivors [1], and may develop decades after acute polio virus infection [4]. Gradual onset weakness occurs most frequently, but not only, in primarily involved muscles resulting in further deterioration of the motor sequelae and functional capacity already present in these patients. The specific criteria for diagnosing PPS include a prior episode of poliomyelitis with evidence of residual neurologic and functional stability lasting for at least 15 years after the acute onset, a gradual (or abrupt) onset of new weakness and abnormal muscle fatigability that persists for at least one year, and exclusion of other medical conditions that may cause similar symptoms [5].

Respiratory symptoms ranging from mildly decreased pulmonary function to overt respiratory failure requiring ventilation occur in up to 40% of patients following acute poliomyelitis. Underlying causes of respiratory depression in these patients may be due to musculoskeletal thoracic cage and/or spinal deformities such as scoliosis or kyphosis, long standing weakness of respiratory muscles and sleep-related disordered breathing, or normal aging process. However, chronic hypoventilation may also develop due to super imposed late onset PPS.

We present a patient with thoracic cage deformity and chronic progressive hypoventilation due to late onset PPS.

PATIENT DESCRIPTION

A 68-year-old hypertensive woman was repeatedly admitted to our department of internal medicine with recurrent respiratory insufficiency. She also reported a progressive right hand weakness that began a few years prior to the respiratory symptoms. Her physical examination demonstrated severe deformation of the chest wall, severe scoliosis, and atrophy of the muscles of both legs and right arm. Routine complete blood count and biochemistry showed no abnormality, and arterial blood gas showed respiratory acidosis with pH 7.23 (normal range 7.35–7.45), pCO₂ 95, HCO₂ 39.9 (normal range 22-26), and pO₂ 53. Chest X-ray showed severe kyphosis and abnormal wall structure but no signs of any acute pathology. Her past medical history included childhood paralytic polio, which left her with residual paraplegia and severe deformities of the spine and chest wall resulting restrictive pulmonary disease. Until recently, her pulmonary status was stable, but in the last decade a progressive decline in respiratory capacity

was observed despite maximal treatment including local and systemic corticosteroids, bronchodilators, antibiotic therapy, and bilevel positive airway pressure respiratory support.

An extensive diagnostic workup ruled out recurrent infections, pulmonary embolism, congestive heart failure, pulmonary parenchymal, and obstructive disease as a trigger for her deteriorating respiratory function. However, a serial pulmonary functional test showed a progressive restrictive pulmonary disease. The patient's pulmonary function continued to deterioration necessitating recurrent intermittent mechanical ventilation complicated by nosocomial infection, which ultimately led to her death.

COMMENT

The diagnosis of PPS as an exacerbating factor of respiratory insufficiency can be challenging due to lack of awareness of this condition as well as the presence other conditions such as chest wall deformities, which are not uncommon in polio survivors.

Indeed, the progressive dyspnea in our patient was attributed to her kyphoscoliosis. Nevertheless, her restrictive disease was stable for many years and extensive inquiry did not reveal a clear etiology of the respiratory deterioration other than PPS. Moreover, progressive weakness in her right hand began a few years prior to the respiratory symptoms. The patient underwent an ambulatory workup that did not reveal the cause, thus the right hand weakness met the criteria for PPS. In combination, despite other reasons that may contribute to her symp-

toms, it is likely that late onset PPS was the predominant factor for her rapid respiratory deterioration.

Patients with PPS usually present with restrictive pulmonary disease without any inflammatory process; therefore, corticosteroid therapy is not generally indicated. Furthermore, the use of corticosteroids could further deteriorate the muscle weakness of these patients and may lead to respiratory failure. Thus, treatment with corticosteroids as well as other myopathic drugs should be restricted in patients with PPS and used only when clearly indicated. It seems prudent that even when clearly indicated, the minimal dose for the minimal time should be used. Once PPS is diagnosed, the treatment for this condition is mainly supportive and requires individualized care in a multidisciplinary setting. It is rarely fatal, but may be dangerous in individuals with respiratory dysfunction or dysphagia [1].

Due to efficient vaccination programs, acute poliomyelitis is no longer common. Nevertheless, polio survivors are still common worldwide. As PPS is prevalent in these survivors, it is prudent to raise the awareness for this condition. Ignoring this significant morbidity can lead to unnecessary tests, delayed diagnosis and mistreatment with potential harm.

CONCLUSIONS

PPS can be a significant cause for respiratory deterioration in patients with previous history of poliomyelitis. Physicians should be aware of this potential diagnosis, as early diagnosis can facilitate individualized treatment plan and prevent unnecessary examinations and mistreatment.

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Capsule

Targeting the SARS-CoV-2 spike

The surface of severe acute respiratory syndrome-coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is decorated with trimeric spikes that bind to host cell receptors. These spikes also elicit an antibody response, so understanding antibody recognition may aid in vaccine design. **Yuan** et al. determined the structure of CR3022, a neutralizing antibody obtained from a convalescent SARS-CoV-infected patient, in complex with the receptor-binding domain of the SARS-CoV-2 spike. The antibody binds to

an epitope conserved between SARS-CoV-2 and SARS-CoV that is distinct from the receptor-binding site. CR3022 likely binds more tightly to SARS-CoV because its epitope contains a glycan not present in SARS-CoV-2. Structural modeling showed that the epitope is only revealed when at least two of the three spike proteins are in a conformation competent to bind the receptor.

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Capsule

Sharpening focus for anti-RSV antibodies

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a paramyxovirus that infects lung epithelial cells, causing potentially severe infections in young children and elderly and immunocompromised persons. Although an effective RSV vaccine remains a major unmet medical need, previous work has identified a stabilized prefusion (pre-F) conformation of the RSV fusion protein as a preferred immunogen for eliciting neutralizing antibodies. **Swanson** and colleagues constructed a multimeric vaccine featuring a central ferritin core connected to eight trimeric pre-F

spikes bearing engineered glycans that mask poorly neutralizing epitopes. This self-assembling nanoparticle vaccine induced stronger neutralizing antibody responses than pre-F trimers in both mice and nonhuman primates. These studies pave the way toward initiating clinical trials to test this vaccine's ability to protect vulnerable human populations from RSV-associated disease.

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בנוסף ישבו בועדה נציגים מפורום המתמחים, מפורום הסטאז'רים, מפורום המומחים הצעירים, מהמועצה המדעית, מארגון רופאי המדינה, מארגון רופאי שירותי בריאות כללית ועוד.

הועדה תבחן את מתכונת עבודת הרופאים ואופי התורנויות, את איכות הטיפול ורמת ההכשרה כמו גם את ההשלכות על רווחת הרופאים והמתמחים בפרט.

במסגרת זו הועדה מעוניינת לשמוע את מגוון הדעות בנושא ולבחון את הפתרונות השונים, ישימותם והשפעתם ותבחן בין היתר:

- את היתכנות המודלים השונים לרבות המשמעויות הנגזרות מבחינת תקינת כח אדם רפואי, כוחות עזר, שכר ותקצוב.
 - את המשמעויות הנגזרות בכל הקשור לאיכות ההכשרה ואיכות הטיפול.
 - את המשמעויות הרוחביות על מתכונת העבודה כולה.
 - את המשמעויות והתמורות באשר לרווחתם של הרופאים והמתמחים בפרט.
- את ההבדלים שעשויים להיגזר מהמודלים השונים בין פריפריה למרכז, את המשמעויות שלהם ואת הפתרונות המוצעים כדי לגשר עליהם.

הוועדה מזמינה את ציבור הרופאים להביא בפניה את עמדתם.

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