MUCORMYCOSIS IN PATIENTS WITH COMPLICATED CIRRHOSIS

Dear Sir,

Abbas et al presented a case series of mucormycosis in patients with cirrhosis.[1] They correctly noted that amphotericin B is the cornerstone of antimicrobial therapy; however, its use is often limited by its serious adverse effects. Also, patients with mucormycosis often require weeks, if not months, of therapy: this is a disadvantage for a medication that is both expensive and available only intravenously. It is therefore surprising that the role of posaconazole in mucormycosis was not discussed.

Posaconazole is a new oral triazole with broad antifungal activity, including *Aspergillus* and *Candida* species, phaeohyphomycetes, non-*Aspergillus* hyalohyphomycetes and zygomycetes (the fungi that cause mucormycosis).[2] A recent study has examined the outcome of mucormycosis in patients who took posaconazole as salvage therapy,[3] in which 17 patients had microbiologically-proven mucormycosis; of these, 12 (71%) had clinical success with posaconazole.

Abbas et al presented patients with underlying cirrhosis.[1] Posaconazole is predominantly metabolised by the liver through glucoronidation. It also causes abnormal liver function tests in 1%–5% of patients.[2] The product information recommends that posaconazole be used with caution in the setting of hepatic impairment.[4] Such a vague recommendation probably reflects the paucity of clinical data on this issue; however, at this stage, it is not contraindicated in hepatic impairment, nor should the dose be altered.[4] In fact, a case report of posaconazole use for candidiasis in the setting of cirrhosis has been published; although the patient died, posaconazole was not the cause of death.[5]

In conclusion, posaconazole is an oral antifungal agent with some efficacy against mucormycosis. It probably should be reserved for patients who fail or cannot tolerate amphotericin B.[6] While it should be used cautiously in those with hepatic impairment, this is currently not a contraindication to its use.

Yours sincerely,

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