

PENICILLINE IN TREATMENT OF BEHÇET'S DISEASE

SÜHEYL ÖKTEN*

I have accidentally observed that patients with Behçet's Disease benefit greatly when given penicilline in large doses. Therefore I almost empirically applied this treatment in 35 cases a short account of which is presented here: All patients suffered from recurrent aphthous ulcers of the mouth and of the genitalia. 6 patients had ocular lesions, 4 presented with erythema nodosum, 16 suffered from arthritis and 4 from thrombophlebitis. Furthermore there was one patient with neurological and one patient with intestinal symptoms. The history of the disease varied from 7 months up to 6 years during which time they had been treated with no success.

Upon preliminary studies all patients were hospitalized and 30 million units of penicilline G was administered I.V. per day until complete healing or significant reduction in the size of the ulcer which occurred between the first 5-20 days of the treatment. The patients were later maintained on Benzathine penicilline (2.4 million every three weeks).

Besides almost complete recovery of the oral and genital lesions visual acuity improved in 4 of 6 patients. Trombophlebitis, sings of central nervous system involvement disappeared completely (one patient of each).

Two patients discontinued the therapy contrary to the advise with resulting recurrence of ulcerations. They both

returned and asked treatment to be initiated again which was likewise followed by complete recovery.

DISCUSSION

Treatment of Behçet's Disease still remains controversial. Colchicine and cortisone are presently widely used for treatment of Behçet's Disease. But both of these drugs produce grave complications when administered for extended periods.

Another drug used in treatment of this disease is levamisol which helps to overcome oral and genital ulcers in up to one third of cases. It is interesting to note that the gradual and slight improvement provided by cortisone was dramatically accelerated upon addition of penicilline.

Even though we presently have no explanation for the effect of penicilline, its beneficial influence in majority of cases appears to leave no room for objection to its ampirical use.

In summary; therapeutic effectiveness of high doses of penicilline (30 million units/day) in the treatment of Behçet's Disease was studied in 35 patients. Almost complete remission was obtained within 5-20 days. The patients were later maintained on 2.4 million U of Benzathine penicilline every three weeks, and were examined every two months.

*From University of Erciyes, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Obstetrics-Gynaecology, Kayseri, Türkiye.