Sexually-transmitted diseases in immigrant population from the perspective of a tropical medicine unit in Spain

Mercedes Rodriguez-Perez, Noelia Moran, Jose A Boga, Candela Menendez, Maria Martinez-Sela, Alicia Garcia, Jonathan Fernandez-Suarez, Azucena Rodriguez-Guardado

Background: Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are very prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Central and South America. For this reason, a high prevalence in immigrants coming from these areas is expected. We describe the prevalence of STIs in immigrants attending at Tropical Medicine Unit of Hospital Universitario Central de Asturias, Spain.

Materials/methods: Observational, retrospective and descriptive study of immigrant patients with STIs diagnosed at the Tropical Medicine Unit of Hospital Universitario Central de Asturias, Spain between 2008-2018. We perform HIV, hepatitis B virus (HBV) and syphilis serologic analysis, in all patients as part of a systematic screening program. The other STIs were investigated only in presence of symptoms. Qualitative variables were compared using the χ2 test. For quantitative variables, the Student Continuous values were expressed as the mean and compared using Student’s t test or Mann–Whitney U test. A P value <0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

Results: A total of 1149 patients were analysed, (53.2% female, mean age 34 years, mean time in Spain 1,444 days. The most frequent areas of origin were: Central Africa (31.2%), South America (31.1%), West Africa (26.5%), North Africa (4.8%), East Africa (1.2%), Central America (3.1%), Southeast Asia (2%). One hundred forty-two (12.3%) patients were positive for syphilis, ninety-two patients (8%) for HIV, seventy-four (6.4%) for chronic hepatitis B, 4 patients had genital herpes (0.3%), 3 gonorrhea (0.3%), and 1 was positive for Chlamydia trachomatis (0.05%). Thirty-seven patients were positive for multiple STIs. Both HIV infection and syphilis were significantly more frequent in patients from Central Africa (p=0.0001), in univariable and multivariable analysis. HIV infection were significantly more frequent in older patients (38 ± 10 versus 34±12 years p = 0.072) with lower time of residence in Spain (760 ±927 versus 1513 ± 1934 days, p= 0.004). Syphilis was significantly more frequent in older patients (43 ± 13 versus 33 ±12 years p=0.007) with higher time in Spain (1511±3431 versus 1451 ± 1557 days p =0.012)

Conclusions: Syphilis and HIV are frequent in immigrant population specially from Central Africa. However the prevalence of other STIs as Chlamydia and gonorrhea was low, which indicated that routine screening may not be indicated.