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2-hour Oral Session
Zoonotic diseases

Brucellosis in a third-level Mediterranean hospital. A retrospective study

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Background: Brucellosis is one of the most widespread zoonoses but especially endemic in the Mediterranean area. It is transmitted to humans by contact with fluids from infected animals or ingestion of raw milk and milk products (mainly soft cheese).

Material/Methods: We reviewed all brucellosis cases diagnosed and treated during the last twenty years at a hospital located in the Mediterranean region.

Results: A total of 55 cases of brucellosis were reviewed. The median age was 44.24 years (range 2-86), 46 patients (83.6%) were men and 9 (16.4%) were women. 31 patients (56.3%) referred no contact with sheep or goats, and only 8 patients (14.5%) had previously consumed unpasteurized cheese or milk. The average duration of symptoms prior to consultation was 37.5 days (range 1-240). The most frequent clinical manifestations were: fever (48 patients, 87.3%), weakness (27 patients, 49%), night sweats (35 patients, 63.6%), arthralgias (19 patients, 34.5%) and low back pain (18 patients, 32.7%). As for diagnosis, *Brucella* was isolated in blood cultures in only seven patients (7.8%) and serologic test (serum agglutination, immunocapture agglutination or both, as well as Rose Bengal agglutination) were positive in all cases. Final diagnose was acute brucellosis in 31 patients (56.4%), spondylitis with or without epidural abscess in 10 patients (18.2%), sacroileitis in 6 patients (10.9%), orchitis or epididymitis in 3 patients (5.5%), endocarditis in 2 patients (3.6%), splenic abscess in 2 patients (3.6%) and pleural effusion in one patient (1.8%). Doxycycline plus rifampin was the most used therapy (15 patients; 27.3%), and doxycycline plus rifampin plus cotrimoxazole was administered in 16 patients (29%). The mean duration of treatment was 120 days (minimum 25 and maximum 2555 days (7 years) in a patient with prosthetic valve endocarditis who also received surgical treatment). Mortality was 0%.

Conclusions: Because of being an occupational disease of traditionally masculine jobs, young men are predominantly affected; but surprisingly a high proportion did not refer any risk factor. Fever remains the most frequent complain, together with osteoarticular complications, but although endemic in our region mean time to consultation was long. Isolation of the infectious agent in biological samples is infrequent (8%) and diagnosis is mainly serological. In our region, the diagnosis of brucellosis should be considered in individuals with otherwise unexplained fever and nonspecific.