

importance of these and other pathogens for different age groups.²

In B.H., Polonnaruwa, bacterial meningitis encountered in the medical wards is a community acquired disease of apparently immunocompetent young adults. The median age of our patients was 31 years.

Gram negative diplococci constituted 44% of the total number of patients and 61% of the positive smears. We could assume that these patients had meningococcal meningitis. In this age group, this is the commonest organism.³ Another 11% of the total or 17% of the positive smears had gram positive diplococci which, under these circumstances, could be assumed to be pneumococci. Therefore, 55% of our patients were treated with Benzyl Penicillin alone. Furthermore 67% of the patients had a positive smear. The potential toxicity of chloramphenicol and the expense of third generation cephalosporins can to a large extent be avoided in this group of patients by a careful study of the CSF — gram stain. The study should be done immediately after the L.P. is done, irrespective of the time of day.

Two patients had gram negative Coccobacilli. It is tempting to assume these to be Haemophilus influenzae, the commonest pathogen in the paediatric age group between 2 months and 6 years. The importance of suspecting an anatomic defect (congenital or after head trauma), parameningeal focus or a defect in antibody synthesis in any adult with H. Influenzae Meningitis should be emphasized.³ Our 60 yr. old male patient died on the day of admission.

The one patient with gram negative bacillary meningitis and diabetic ketoacidosis expired 2 hours after admission. His urine contained numerous pus cells. The Third generation cephalosporius (unavailable to us at the time) have provided a significant advance in the therapy of such patients. 30% of patients with Gram negative bacillary meningitis occur in conjunction with head trauma, 50% of cases occur following neurosurgery and 20% are "medical".¹ Our patient falls into the last group and he was immunosuppressed due to his diabetes mellitus.

Summary

1. In this group of patients the gram strain was positive in 67% of the patients and permitted 55% of the patients to be treated with penicillin alone.
2. Neisseria meningitidis appears to be the commonest identifiable pathogen (44% of the total patients and 61% of the positive smears).
3. The mortality of the patients whose CSF gram stains were outside the common two was very high. (2 of 3)

References

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