

Clinical Image

Erythema Nodosum Leprosum and Thalidomide: How Effective?

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Erythema Nodosum Leprosum (ENL) is considered a distinct entity from the reaction state of leprosy, it is a complication observed during lepromatous leprosy, its occurrence before any antibacillary treatment is possible, but relatively rare in our practice [1].

Corticosteroid therapy is considered the reference treatment in almost all countries affected by this disease where thalidomide is not available. However, thalidomide offers an effective alternative to corticosteroid therapy, allows better long-term control and avoids the adverse effects of prolonged corticosteroid therapy [2]. We report a case of ENL in Lepromatous Leprosy (LL) resistant to conventional treatment then treated with thalidomide with good improvement.

29-year-old patient treated for lepromatous leprosy in October 2017 by polychemotherapy with poor treatment compliance, the patient was lost to sight for 8 months, consulted for a diffuse rash, progressing by flares for a year, calmed down by taking oral corticosteroids in an anarchic way. On examination, low grade fever was noted at 38°C, a diffuse nodular eruption on the extension faces of the forearms, thighs, legs, thorax and back painful on palpation independent of specific lepromatous lesions, hyperalgesic multineuritis with motor and sensory disorders in the lower limbs, bilateral gonarthrosis, bacterial conjunctivitis and orchiepididymitis.

Biological examination objectified hyperleukocytosis, inflammatory syndrome, joint puncture in favor of septic arthritis. Bacilloscopy showed BAAR at 4+. The patient was put under acetylsalicylic acid 2 g per day and clofazimine without improvement then thalidomide was started at a dose of 400 mg per day for a period of twelve months with an improvement. After 24 months the patient had no more ENL flare-ups (Fig. 1).

Citation: Siham B, et al. Erythema Nodosum Leprosum and Thalidomide: How Effective? J Dermatol Res. 2023;4(2):1-2.

<https://doi.org/10.46889/JDR.2023.42011>

Received Date: 21-06-2023

Accepted Date: 09-07-2023

Published Date: 16-07-2023



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Figure 1: (a) Diffuse nodular eruption at the extremities (right); (b) Complete improvement after treatment with thalidomide (left).

Keywords: Bacilloscopy; Erythema Nodosum Leprosum; Lepromatous Leprosy; Corticosteroid Therapy

Consent

The examination of the patient was conducted according to the Declaration of Helsinki principles.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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