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Management of Severe Asthma with Omalizumab in United Arab Emirates

Authors : Shanza Akram, Samir Salah, Imran Saleem, Jassim Abdou, Ashraf Al Zaabi

Abstract : Estimated prevalence of asthma in UAE is around 10% (900,000 people). Patients with persistent symptoms despite using high dose ICS plus a second controller +/- Oral steroids are considered to have severe asthma. Omalizumab (Xolair) is an anti-IgE monoclonal antibody approved as add-on therapy for severe allergic asthma. The objective of our study was to obtain baseline characteristics of our local cohort, to determine the efficacy of omalizumab based on clinical outcomes pre and post 52 weeks of treatment and to assess safety and tolerability. Medical records of patients receiving omalizumab therapy for asthma at Zayed Military Hospital, Abu Dhabi were retrospectively reviewed. Patients fulfilling the criteria for severe allergic asthma as per GINA guidelines were included. Asthma control over 12 months pre and post omalizumab were analyzed by taking into account the number of exacerbations, hospitalizations, maintenance of medication dosages, the need for reliever therapy and PFT's. 21 patients (5 females) with mean age 41 years were included. The mean duration of therapy was 22 months. 19 (91%) patients had Allergic Rhinitis/Sinusitis. Mean serum total IgE level was 648 IU/ml (65-1859). 11 (52%) patients were on oral maintenance steroids pre-treatment. 7 patients managed to stop steroids on treatment while 4 were able to decrease the dosage. Mean exacerbation rate decreased from 5 per year pre-treatment to 1.36 while on treatment. The number of hospitalizations decreased from a mean of 2 per year to 0.9 per year. Reliever inhaler usage decreased from mean of 40 to 15 puffs per week.2 patients discontinued therapy, 1 due to lack of benefit (2 doses) and 2nd due to severe persistent side effects. Patient compliance was poor in some cases. Treatment with omalizumab reduced the number of exacerbations, hospitalizations, maintenance and reliever medications, and is generally well tolerated. Our results show that there is room for improved documentation in terms of symptom recording and use of rescue medication at our institution. There is also need for better patient education and counseling in order to improve compliance.

Keywords : asthma, exacerbations, omalizumab, IgE
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