Visceral Leishmaniasis without Fever in a Kidney Transplant Recipient

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margin together with dullness over Traube’s space. Laboratory findings were as follows: serum urea, 33 mg/dl; serum creatinine, 1.1 mg/dl; hematocrit, 22%; leukocyte count, 2,200/mm3; platelet count, 260,000/mm3; ESR, 63 mm/h; albuminemia, 3.3 g/dl; globulinemia, 5.5 g/dl; protein electrophoresis; polyclonal gammopathy; ALT, 56 IU; AST, 54 IU; γ-GT, 57 IU; total bilirubinemia, 0.7 mg/dl; C-reactive proteinemia, 41 mg/dl; β2-microglobulinemia, 8.2 mg/dl. Anti-HCV antibody was negative (RIBA 2). A stool test for occult blood was negative. No acido-resistant bacilli were found in the spu-

Dear Sir,

Visceral leishmaniasis (kala-azar), a sub-acute infectious disease caused by the protozoan Leishmania donovani and endemic in Mediterranean countries, has been reported previously in small numbers of transplant recipients [1-7]. We would like to report the first such case diagnosed in Turkey. Our patient, a 34-year-old male with end-stage kidney failure due to chronic glomerulonephritis, had a live donor renal transplant in our unit on May 1988 and was put under standard prednisolone (Pred)-azathioprine (Aza) immunosuppressive regimen.

His follow-up was uneventful until post-transplant month 30 when hepatitis B markers were found positive. ALT and AST levels were normal and a liver biopsy was not done. At posttransplant month 52 his hematocrit was 32%, hemoglobin 10.2 g/dl and leukocyte count 3,800/mm3. At posttransplant month 58, he had lost 13 kg weight and complained of weakness and night sweats. In addition to anemia and leukopenia, his ALT-AST levels had increased twofold above normal and he had low normal albuminemia and hyperglobulinemia. Because of a likelihood of Aza toxicity his Aza dosage was lowered from 100 to 75 mg/day. At post-transplant month 64 he was hospitalized.
He had lost 13 kg over the last 4 months and weighed 60 kg. Body temperature, blood pressure and pulse rate were normal. At physical examination he had no lymphadenomegaly, no liver enlargement, but a splenic enlargement of 1 cm beyond the costal...

Fig. 1. L. donovani showing typical morphology in the bone marrow biopsy.

An abdominal ultrasonography revealed a normal-looking liver with normal size and outline. The portal vein diameter was 15 mm and the spleen was enlarged with a diameter of 147 mm. No abdominal lymphadenomegaly was noted.

His spleen became palpable at 3 cm below the costal margin. An abdominal CT revealed a spleen size of 162 × 60 × 65 mm. The portal vein diameter had increased to 20 mm, but the liver size and structure were normal and there was no detectable intra-

**Fig. 1.** L. donovani showing typical morphology in the bone marrow biopsy.

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2,800/mm³, respectively). An abdominal ultrasonography revealed liver and spleen enlargement and the portal vein diameter was 17 mm. The ELISA test for Leishmania IgG antibody had become negative. The bone marrow aspiration and biopsy and also a splenic aspiration remained negative for protozoa under light microscopy. However, L. donovani was cultured from bone marrow biopsy in NNN medium.

Therapy was reinstalled with allopurinol (1,200-1,600 mg) and Glucantime (20 mg/kg/day, total 850 mg) for 25 days. During therapy there was no alternation in serum urea and creatinine and the liver enzymes were normal. The spleen was 147 mm on ultrasonography. At 6 weeks posttreatment, all clinical findings and laboratory values were within normal limits except the hepatic enzyme levels (ALT, 39 IU; AST, 45 IU). Ten months after cessation of Glucantime treatment (posttransplant 82nd month) the liver biopsy was repeated because of high levels of liver enzymes. There was only one portal area infiltrated by mononuclear cells in the histo-pathologic examination of the biopsy material. First-degree esophageal varices were observed in the upper gastrointestinal endoscopic examination. Atrophy of the right lobe of the liver, an enlarged vena porta (>15 mm) and splenomegaly were found in the abdominal USG. These findings were consistent with portal hypertension. The patient has been followed in good general condition for 18 months after the end of his treatment for leishmaniasis and no signs of decompensated portal hypertension have been observed.

All of the cases of posttransplant leishmaniasis reported in the literature were diagnosed while investigating etiology of the fever [1-7]. In our case, however, despite the presence of bicytopenia and splenomegaly, fever was absent. Our patient’s liver biopsy findings were consistent with minimal hepatitis and signs of portal hypertension were apparent. Since the initial liver biopsy findings did not match with either hepatitis B or hepatitis C, the portal hypertension could possibly be related to kala-azar.

In conclusion, in endemic areas, visceral leishmaniasis should be taken into consideration in immunocompromised or kidney transplant patients with unexplained accelerated ESR, bi/pancytopenia and hypergammaglobulinemia.

References