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COLCHICINE IN THE TREATMENT OF GRAVES' OPHTHALMOPATHY: A PROSPECTIVE AND RANDOMIZED TRIAL COMPARED WITH PREDNISONE

FRANCISCO J. C. STAMATO, PAULO G. MANSO, ÂNGELA M. B. WOLOSKER, LUIS PAVES, DEISE M. NAKANAMI and REINALDO P. FURLANETTO To investigate if colchicine, an effective anti-inflammatory drug, is valuable in the treatment of Graves' ophthalmopathy (GO), we compared its effect with prednisone in 22 patients during the inflammatory phase of GO. All patients, similar in age, sex and smoking habits, were euthyroid for at least 3 months and divided randomly in two groups, one treated with colchicine (G1, n=12) in the dose of 1,5 mg/day in the first month, followed by a dose of 1 mg/day during the second and third months and the other treated with prednisone (G2, n=13) in the dose of 0.75 mg/kg/day for 1 month followed by decreasing doses during the second and third months. They were monitored with ophthalmologic assessment (clinical activity score-CAS) and magnetic resonance imaging, using a signal intensity ratio (SIR) of the recti muscles in comparison to the cerebral substantia alba. Amelioration of the inflammatory process was seen in 68% of the orbits in both groups. A decrease in CAS, from inflammatory to stable, was observed in 72% of G1 and 94% of G2 patients. SIR also had a significant reduction in both groups after treatment: from an initial median of 1.14 in G1 and 1.27 in G2, has evolved, after treatment, to 1.07 in G1 and 0.69 in G2. The variation between both groups after treatment was not significant ($p=0.22$). None of the patients treated with colchicine had side effects; on the other hand, side effects in G2 were weight gain, edema, gastric complaints, hirsutism, weakness, depression, and alterations in blood pressure. In conclusion, colchicine had a beneficial effect on inflammatory phase of GO without the side effects of prednisone.