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Epidemiologic findings of infectious keratitis in the elderly – a 32 years review

Epidemiologic findings of infectious keratitis in the elderly – a 32 years review
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Purpose: To describe the epidemiologic findings of infectious keratitis in the elderly in a reference service.

Method: Retrospective study. We revised patients' files age 60 years and older (WHO criteria – 1984) that were attended in the Ocular Microbiology Laboratory of UNIFESP according to age, gender, diagnosis, involved eye, previous topic medication, previous ocular surgery, history of trauma, and results of bacterioscopy and culture. Data underwent descriptive analysis.

Results: From 1975 to 2007 were included 16.576 patient registers. From these, 2.890 (17.4%) were elderly above 60 years-old, and 1.487 were from keratitis suspected patients. The most prevalent age group was 60 to 69 years (46.8%). There were 681 males (45.8%) and 806 females (54.2%). 64 patients (4.3%) had an ocular surgery less than 2 months before the beginning of the complaints (mainly keratoplasty or cataract removal). 103 patients (6.9%) had a history of trauma related to the keratitis. The place of collect was the emergency room in 733 cases (49.2%) and the ambulatory in 540 cases (36.3%). Previous use of topical antimicrobial medication was found in 646 cases (43.4%).

Bacterioscopy was positive in 36.1% of cases. The cultures were positive for bacteria in 47.5% of cases (from these: Gram negative rods 30.2%, Corynebacterium 7.3%, Pseudomonas 13.4%, Staphylococcus aureus 21.7%, Staph. Coag. neg. 31.2%, Streptococcus sp 17.9%, multibacterial 17.6%), for fungus in 5.7% and for Acanthamoeba sp in 0.6% of cases. The remaining 46.2% of cases did not show any identified etiological agent.

Conclusions: The infectious keratitis in the elderly was more common in females and from 60 to 69 years old. The prevalence of risk factors such as ocular surgery or trauma was similar to those described for keratitis in general population. As expected for elders, there was a higher prevalence of infection by gram negative rods and multiple agents. Despite of the efforts, in almost 50% of the cases it was not possible to identify the etiological agent of the keratitis, thus emphasizing the importance of the clinical judgment and empirical treatment in this threatening condition.