

Human immunodeficiency virus- 1 in leprosy patients attending Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to determine if *Mycobacterium leprae* is an opportunistic pathogen in immunosuppressed subjects with HIV infection. Ninety six leprosy patients at Infectious Diseases Hospital (IDH), Nairobi were screened for, HIV-1 antibody between January 1991 and June 1992. The patients included 15 who were diagnosed during the study period and 81 who were previously diagnosed and were on anti-leprosy treatment. Blood was screened for HIV antibody by first ELISA and double positive samples were confirmed by a second ELISA. The HIV seronegative patients were re-tested serologically every 3 months. Smears from skin slits were used to determine bacterial index and the patients were classified according to criteria described by Ridley and Jopling. The patients were re-assessed clinically monthly. The mean age of the patients was 40 years and ranged from 13 to 78 years. Forty seven percent had paucibacillary and 53% had multibacillary leprosy. The HIV seroprevalence was 8% in previously diagnosed patients and zero in the newly diagnosed patients. There were no changes in clinical spectrum in HIV seropositive patients during follow up period; neither reversal reactions nor erythema nodosum leprosum were observed. The study suggests that *M. leprae* may not be an opportunistic pathogen in immunosuppressed subjects with HIV infection.