

Anthrax revisited

Abstract:

: Anthrax is an ancient disease affecting animals and humans. Sporadic cases of anthrax and small epidemics have been seen from time to time in different parts of the world and in Africa. However many clinicians are not very familiar with the various presentations and management of anthrax. It is relevant for the health care workers to re-familiarise themselves with all aspects of anthrax, with the impending threat of bioterrorism. **OBJECTIVE:** To familiarise healthcare workers on all aspects of anthrax. **STUDY SELECTION:** To describe epidemiology pathogenesis, clinical features, management and prevention of anthrax including measures to take when weapons grade anthrax is suspected. **DATA SYNTHESIS:** Three forms of the disease are recognised, cutaneous, inhalational and intestinal. Cutaneous anthrax is the most common form. Inhalation anthrax is the most severe form of anthrax. The treatment of anthrax in most cases is penicillin, however with the threat of bioterrorism, intentional releases of anthrax spores in the environment has caused much concern. Weapons grade anthrax of more virulent strain and resistant to commonly used antibiotics is possible. **CONCLUSION:** In view of the different clinical presentations and outcomes it is important that health care workers re-familiarise themselves with the disease and in the event of bioterrorism are able to take appropriate measures.