

Abstract

BACKGROUND: Childhood leukemia and lymphoma are common problems in Tropical Africa, including Kenya. Studies done in Western populations indicate that 25-50% of patients with leukemia and lymphoma have specific or nonspecific cutaneous signs. In dark-skinned patients, reports of such mucocutaneous manifestations are scarce. The lesions in these patients may easily be missed, if not specifically looked for. **METHOD:** Eighty-six indigenous Kenyan children with a confirmed diagnosis of leukemia or lymphoma were specifically examined for any mucocutaneous manifestations at presentation, during their treatment, and during subsequent follow-up. Whenever possible, an attempt was made to determine the causes of these lesions. All patients were given standard therapy for the primary hematologic disorder. **RESULTS:** Two-thirds of the patients had mucocutaneous symptomatology at presentation: 17.4% had skin infiltration by the malignant cells. During therapy an even larger number developed nonspecific skin manifestations. Most of these were the result of myelosuppression, immunosuppression, or direct cytotoxic effects on tissues. **CONCLUSIONS:** Mucocutaneous manifestations in black children with leukemia and lymphoma are very common.