

Abstract

Of the 1,310 bone marrow examinations performed in a 16-month period in patients with diverse haematological, oncological and other disorders, 620 had sufficient data for analysis. Seventy-nine percent were from the two main hospitals viz: Parirenyatwa and Harare Central Hospitals. Investigation for anaemia (42.6 percent), staging of malignant disease (14.4 percent) and pancytopenia (10.3 percent) formed the commonest triad of indications for requesting the examination. There were 318 (51 percent) males, mean age +/- s.d. of 33.8 +/- 22.6 years (range 6 months to 80 years); and 302 (49 percent) females, mean age +/- s.d. of 32.6 +/- 20.7 years (range 6 months to 78 years) giving a male to female ratio of 1.1:1. Of the 620 patients studied, 452 (73 percent) were adults (M:F ratio of 1:1) mean age +/- s.d. of 42.8 +/- 17.3 years (range 16-80 years); and 168 (27 percent) were children (M:F ratio of 1.1:1) mean age +/- s.d. of 7.3 +/- 4.5 years (range 6 months to 15 years). The three commonest diseases in the combined (adults and children) group were: megaloblastic anaemia (25.2 percent); acute or chronic leukaemia (19.2 percent) and iron deficiency anaemia (10.5 percent). These three diseases respectively accounted for 32 percent, 17.5 percent and 10.8 percent of the cases in the adult (16 years and over) group; whereas in the paediatric (0-15 years) group, the top three diseases were: acute leukaemia (22 percent); Hodgkins and non-Hodgkins lymphomas (14.3 percent) and retinoblastoma (13.7 percent). These preliminary observations indicate some of the commonest haematological and oncological disorders where intense research might be beneficial to the community in Zimbabwe.