

Abstract

BACKGROUND: Kaposi's sarcoma (KS) is associated epidemiologically with HIV infection and a number of countries have reported a dramatic increase in the incidence of KS with the advent of AIDS. Although AIDS is prevalent in Kenya, no studies on the impact of AIDS on the pattern of KS has been carried out. **OBJECTIVE:** To determine any changes in the pattern of KS that might have occurred since the advent of AIDS in the country. **DESIGN:** Retrospective descriptive study. **SETTING:** Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH). **METHOD:** Pathology records of cases of KS diagnosed at KNH from 1968 to 1997 were analysed with respect to relative frequency, age, sex and site distribution; and trend. The period was divided into the pre and post AIDS era from 1983, which is the time the first AIDS patient was reported in the country. **RESULT:** A total of 1108 cases of KS consisting of 911 males and 197 females were recorded. The relative frequency of KS ranged between 2% to 5% of the total malignancies. There was a gradual decline in the male to female ratio from about 10:1 in the sixties to about 2:1 in 1997. There was no dramatic difference in the age distribution in the pre and post AIDS era, although a large number of cases were recorded as adults without age specification in the post AIDS era. Site distribution was characteristic of the disease with most of the cases having the lesions occurring in the lower limbs and involving the skin. **CONCLUSION:** Although these findings do not demonstrate a dramatic alteration in the pattern of KS in the post AIDS era there were indications that such changes may have been obscured by under-reporting. The fall in the male:female ratio is a strong indication of a rise in KS among female patients. A further study is necessary to elucidate the true impact of AIDS on the pattern of KS in the country.