

Abstract:

BACKGROUND: In Kenya many patients exposed to the HIV infection present with orofacial lesions as the primary manifestations of the disease and only a few studies have been performed to document this observation. **OBJECTIVE:** To clinically evaluate and document the range and pattern of oral lesions in a group of hospitalised patients with HIV-infection. **DESIGN:** A prospective study. **SETTING:** Coast Province General Hospital in Mombasa, Kenya, which is the main referral institution serving a population of approximately two million people. **METHODS:** Examination of all the cases included in the study was performed according to the WHO criteria. Both male and female patients aged 16 years and above were selected. The criterion of recruitment was based on a suspicion of immunosuppression, the presence of oral manifestations and the willingness to participate in the study. Prior to the examination each patient had undergone counselling followed by two consecutive screening tests using the ELISA technique. Where indicated incisional biopsy was performed to confirm the clinical diagnosis of the relevant lesions. In collaboration with the medical team, treatment was administered as per the needs of the patient in terms of anti-fungals, antivirals or topical corticosteroids. **RESULTS:** Of the 61 cases, 25(41%) were males and 36(59%) females with an age range of 19 to 65 years (mean = 34.7 years). While all the cases had periodontal disease, over 80% had candidiasis of the hyperplastic, erythematous and pseudomembranous types. Lymphadenopathy and angular cheilitis were each diagnosed in 27.9% of the cases; while oral Kaposi's sarcoma was seen in 13% of the patients. Other conditions seen included persistent oral ulceration (11.5%), oral hairy leukoplakia and herpes zoster each constituting 4.9%; herpes simplex, mucosal hyperpigmentation, parotomegaly and facial palsy each comprised six per cent and oral warts seen in one case. In accordance with the pattern and prevalence of oral manifestations in our study, the results were largely consistent with those documented elsewhere. **CONCLUSION:** For the alleviation of the morbidity arising from the commonly occurring lesions, early detection is mandatory. Furthermore, documentation of the varied regional patterns of occurrence of these lesions may aid in the rational application of the emerging treatments.