

Abstract

We have studied, by light and electron microscopy, left ventricular endomyocardial biopsy specimens from 18 African patients (14 men) with idiopathic dilated cardiomyopathy in Nairobi. Nine patients (50%) had evidence of healing myocarditis, that is the presence of a mild inflammatory cell infiltration within the myocardium. Interstitial fibrosis was prominent in five patients (28%) and in all 18 specimens there were hypertrophied muscle fibres. Therefore, half of the patients with idiopathic dilated cardiomyopathy had histological signs of a previous myocarditis. There was no serological evidence of a previous or recent coxsackie infection or any other common viral infections. It seems probable that the myocarditis was due to an inappropriate immunological reaction to myocardial muscle.