

2016

Cyclophosphamide for Suspected Primary Angiitis of the Central Nervous System in a Patient with Human Immunodeficiency Virus: A Case Report

Martha M. Rumore

Touro College of Pharmacy, martha.rumore@touro.edu

Samantha Su

Jake Pellinen

Follow this and additional works at: <https://touro scholar.touro.edu/tcopynypubs>

 Part of the [Immune System Diseases Commons](#), [Nervous System Diseases Commons](#), and the [Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rumore, M. M., Su, S., & Pellinen, J. (2016). Cyclophosphamide for suspected primary angiitis of the central nervous system in a patient with human immunodeficiency virus: A case report. *International Journal of Case Reports and Images*, 7(10), 644-652.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Touro College of Pharmacy (New York) at Touro Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Touro College of Pharmacy (New York) Publications and Research by an authorized administrator of Touro Scholar. For more information, please contact carrie.levinson2@touro.edu.

Cyclophosphamide for suspected primary angiitis of the central nervous system in a patient with human immunodeficiency virus: A case report

Martha M. Rumore, Samantha Su, Jake Pellinen

ABSTRACT

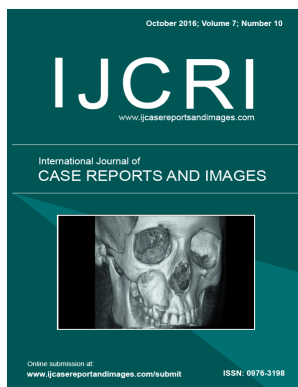
Introduction: Central nervous system (CNS) vasculitis is rare, including in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), occurring in less than 1% of patients. Systemic vasculitis affecting the CNS is termed secondary CNS vasculitis, whereas primary CNS vasculitis, referred to as primary angiitis of the CNS (PACNS) refers to an extremely rare disease specifically confined to the CNS. Only some cases of PACNS in HIV patients have been reported in literature.

Case Report: We report a case of a 46-year-old female with HIV who developed probable primary CNS vasculitis, which was treated with intravenous cyclophosphamide and glucocorticoids for both induction and maintenance. A systematic literature review regarding PACNS and its therapeutic management is presented in this report. There were no clinical trials for PACNS. Based on the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) classes of evidence for therapeutic effectiveness, most data is of intermediate or weak strength.

Conclusion: This case highlights diagnostic and clinical features of PACNS and provides an overview of the current literature regarding pharmacotherapy. Further case reports and additional studies are needed.



International Journal of Case Reports and Images (IJCRI)



International Journal of Case Reports and Images (IJCRI) is an international, peer reviewed, monthly, open access, online journal, publishing high-quality, articles in all areas of basic medical sciences and clinical specialties.

Aim of IJCRI is to encourage the publication of new information by providing a platform for reporting of unique, unusual and rare cases which enhance understanding of disease process, its diagnosis, management and clinico-pathologic correlations.

IJCRI publishes Review Articles, Case Series, Case Reports, Case in Images, Clinical Images and Letters to Editor.

Website: www.ijcasereportsandimages.com

Cyclophosphamide for suspected primary angiitis of the central nervous system in a patient with human immunodeficiency virus: A case report

Martha M. Rumore, Samantha Su, Jake Pellinen

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Central nervous system (CNS) vasculitis is rare, including in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), occurring in less than 1% of patients. Systemic vasculitis affecting the CNS is termed secondary CNS vasculitis, whereas primary CNS vasculitis, referred to as primary angiitis of the CNS (PACNS) refers to an extremely rare disease specifically confined to the CNS. Only some cases of PACNS in HIV patients have been reported in literature. **Case Report:** We report a case of a 46-year-old female with HIV who developed probable primary CNS vasculitis, which was treated with intravenous cyclophosphamide and glucocorticoids for both induction and maintenance. A systematic literature review regarding PACNS and its therapeutic management is presented in this report. There were no clinical trials for PACNS. Based on the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) classes of evidence for therapeutic effectiveness, most data is of intermediate or weak strength. **Conclusion:** This case highlights diagnostic and clinical features of PACNS and provides an overview of the current literature

regarding pharmacotherapy. Further case reports and additional studies are needed.

Keywords: Primary angiitis, PACNS, HIV, Cyclophosphamide, Primary CNS vasculitis

How to cite this article

Rumore MM, Su S, Pellinen J. Cyclophosphamide for suspected primary angiitis of the central nervous system in a patient with human immunodeficiency virus: A case report. Int J Case Rep Images 2016;7(10):644–652.

Article ID: Z01201610CR10702MR

doi:10.5348/ijcri-2016114-CR-10702

Martha M. Rumore^{1,2}, Samantha Su², Jake Pellinen³

Affiliations: ¹Social, Behavioral & Administrative Pharmacy, Touro College of Pharmacy, New York, NY 10027, USA;

²Department of Pharmacy, Mount Sinai Beth Israel Medical Center, New York, NY 10003, USA; ³Department of Neurology, NYU Langone Medical Center, New York, NY 10016, USA.

Corresponding Author: Martha M. Rumore, Social, Behavioral & Administrative Pharmacy, Touro College of Pharmacy, New York, NY 10027, USA; E-mail: martha.rumore@touro.edu

Received: 02 May 2016

Accepted: 08 July 2016

Published: 01 October 2016

INTRODUCTION

Primary angiitis of the CNS (PACNS), also referred to as primary CNS vasculitis (PCNSV), CNS vasculitis, and previously, cerebral or primary granulomatous angiitis, is an extremely rare but serious disease with an incidence of 2.4 cases per one million person-years [1–3]. PACNS, unlike other vasculitides, is confined to the CNS. HIV is associated with various systemic vasculitides, from small to large vessel, immune-mediated to infectious. However, PACNS is less common than any systemic vasculitis in both the general population as well as in patients with HIV [4]. After an extensive literature review only a few case reports of PACNS in HIV patients have been identified [5, 6]. Further, in view of diagnostic advances and updated classification, it is uncertain if these cases represent true PACNS [7].

PACNS remains a diagnostic challenge as presentation varies from patient to patient and can range from strokes to chronic headaches. It occurs with the same frequency in men and women with a median age of 50 years and may occur in both adult and pediatric patients [8, 9]. However, the presentation and treatment in pediatric patients differs from that of adults [2, 8]. Therefore, this review is limited to adult patients with PACNS.

The disease is characterized by inflammatory infiltrates composed of lymphocytes, together with necrosis limited to the medium and small vessels of the CNS. The Calabrese diagnostic criteria were developed over 20 years ago, however, MRI scan and pathology are the best diagnostic tools as clinical findings are non-specific and blood tests are usually normal [10]. Recently, subtypes of PACNS have been identified; however, classification remains a challenge [11]. Morbidity and mortality are associated with cerebral infarctions and involvement of large vessels. The prognosis has improved since 1983, when Cupps et al. reported success using a combination of cyclophosphamide and glucocorticoids [12].

Today, treatment includes glucocorticoids and cyclophosphamide, as it remains difficult to predict which patients would do well with glucocorticoid monotherapy [3, 12]. Cyclophosphamide has been shown to improve survival [12]. The optimal duration of treatment is unknown for this off-label use. Outcome is variable with some patients fully recovering and others experiencing permanent neurological damage. Toxicities associated with cyclophosphamide include urothelial toxicity such as cystitis, hematuria, bladder cancer, and infertility. Glucocorticoid toxicity includes bone loss, osteoporosis, diabetes mellitus, and Cushing's syndrome.

In patients intolerant to cyclophosphamide or those who respond poorly to the drug, rituximab has been used [2, 13]. Some patients receive weekly intramuscular methotrexate maintenance therapy. Other alternatives include azathioprine, chlorambucil, tocilizumab, cyclosporine, aspirin, tumor necrosis factors (infliximab and etanercept), and mycophenolate mofetil [1, 14–16].

We report a case of probable PACNS in a patient with HIV treated successfully with cyclophosphamide and pulse corticosteroids. Additionally, we conducted a systematic literature review for PACNS and evaluated the strength of the evidence using modified American Academy of Neurology (AAN) classes of evidence for therapeutic effectiveness criteria [17].

CASE REPORT

A 46-year-old female was admitted for headache, vertigo, and an altered mental state. For several days prior to presentation, she developed increasing confusion and forgetfulness. She showed anterograde amnesia and was not oriented to day or time. Her past medical history included type 2 diabetes mellitus, HIV, hypertension,

depression, and vertigo. Her home medications were metformin 500 mg twice daily, insulin glargine 10 units SQ nightly at bedtime, benazepril 20 mg once daily, amlodipine 10 mg once daily, escitalopram 10 mg once daily, atorvastatin 20 mg once daily, dolutegravir 50 mg once daily, lamivudine-abacavir 300 mg/600 mg once daily, and sulfamethoxazole-trimethoprim 800 mg/160 mg once daily. She also had a tooth extraction and a cold several days prior to the onset of her presenting symptoms. Her social history was positive for former illicit substance abuse. In the emergency department, she received acetaminophen 650 mg and meclizine 25 mg for symptom management. Her initial coagulation studies, complete blood count, and chemistries were unremarkable except for mild hyperglycemia (118 mg/dL, N 74–106), hyperbilirubinemia (2.4 mg/dL, N 0.2–1.3), and an ESR of 48 mm/hr (N 0–24). The patient's CD4 count was 1026 cells/mm³, hemoglobin A_{1c} was 7.8, and vitamin B₁₂ and TSH were within normal limits. At this time the patient's weight was 93 kg. Her initial neurologic evaluation was non-focal apart from altered mentation. She was admitted while a broad infectious and inflammatory workup commenced.

A non-contrast computed tomography (CT) scan of the head revealed a right occipital hypodensity with minimal mass effect on the adjacent brain parenchyma and no evidence of midline shift, most consistent with subacute infarct, and was otherwise unremarkable appearing.

Subsequent brain magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan with and without contrast revealed acute infarcts in multiple vascular territories, including infarcts in the right middle cerebral artery distribution, left paramedian pons, bilateral occipital lobes, as well as punctate infarcts in the posterior left frontal lobe (Figures 1 and 2). Vascular imaging revealed severe proximal basilar artery stenosis, bilateral distal vertebral artery stenosis, and moderate bilateral internal carotid artery cavernous stenosis. A lumbar puncture was performed and a cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) analysis was unrevealing apart from lymphocytosis. Though a broad infectious workup was negative, her clinical status worsened, and she was started on cyclophosphamide for presumed CNS vasculitis. Subsequent MRI scan revealed new infarcts in the inferior right cerebellum in the distribution of the right posterior inferior cerebellar artery, as well as in the splenium of the corpus callosum, expansion of infarcts in the right paramedian pons and corpus callosum, and hemorrhagic conversion of the right occipital infarct.

A conventional angiogram was consistent with vasculitis, and even though a brain biopsy was performed, it did not capture a representative area of inflammation that was seen on MRI. While tissue diagnosis is considered the gold standard, repeat biopsy was not pursued, as the risks did not outweigh the benefits given the clinical context, high pretest probability, and her response to treatment. Therefore, she was diagnosed with probable PACNS based on her fulminant course with multiple successive strokes in the

setting of lymphocytic CSF pleocytosis, conventional angiogram consistent with vasculitis, and absence of systemic vasculitis. Furthermore, she was stabilized after prolonged course of high dose steroids with additional pulse dose cyclophosphamide. Additionally, her HIV was controlled, with a CD4 count of 1026 cells/mm³, and she was kept on daily pneumocystis jiroveci prophylaxis with sulfamethoxazole-trimethoprim.

At the time of submission of this report, the patient had received three cycles of cyclophosphamide therapy. During the first cycle the patient received intravenous

cyclophosphamide 1000 mg after hydration with 0.9% NS, and premedication with ondansetron 16 mg IVPB for nausea. The patient was started on prednisone 80 mg once daily at the start of cyclophosphamide therapy, which was continued upon discharge. Approximately four weeks later, the patient was admitted again for the second cycle of the same regimen. An MRI scan during this admission showed stable infarcts compared to baseline. The patient received the same premedication and intravenous hydration as in cycle one. Approximately four weeks after the second cycle, the patient was admitted for cycle three, consisting of the same regimen as before. At this time she was deemed to be neurologically stable and responding well to treatment.

DISCUSSION

Central nervous system vasculitis can be classified as primary or secondary [3, 18, 19]. It is primary when there is no other involvement than the CNS and secondary when it occurs with other inflammatory or systemic conditions such as connective tissue diseases, autoimmune or infectious diseases such as polyarteritis nodosa, systemic lupus erythematosus, varicella zoster, and HIV [9, 18]. The precise causes and pathogenesis of PACNS are unknown.

Our patient was HIV positive but had no evidence of systemic vasculitis or systemic symptoms such as fever, weight loss, or malaise. Furthermore, there was no alternative etiology to PACNS. HIV itself can cause vasculitis, though this occurs as a consequence of opportunistic infections such as cytomegalovirus, meningitis, and mycobacterium avium [4, 9]. The vasculitis is thought to be mainly the result of an immune response. A pathogenic mechanism in HIV may be interaction of T cell mediated cells, superantigens, adhesion molecules, immune complexes, cytokines, and growth factors [4, 20].

Secondary CNS vasculitis such as infections (e.g. neurosyphilis), systemic vasculitis, and connective tissue disease should be ruled out in cases of suspected PACNS. Our patient did not have clinical or laboratory evidence of such processes, e.g. the anemia, thrombocytopenia, elevated liver enzymes, and low complement typically associated with systemic vasculitis [21]. Infectious causes of vasculitis were ruled out prior to placing the patient on cyclophosphamide, which is immunosuppressive.

Diagnostic criteria for PACNS were suggested in 1987 by Calabrese and Mallek [21]. The differential diagnosis is broad and includes reversible cerebral vasoconstriction syndromes and systemic vasculitis [10, 22]. Reversible vasoconstriction syndrome may be associated with medications, hypertension, eclampsia or the postpartum period, and is the most common mimicker of PACNS. Other mimickers are listed in Table 1 [3, 21, 22–26].

Our patient presented with cognitive impairment and headache, which constitute the two most common

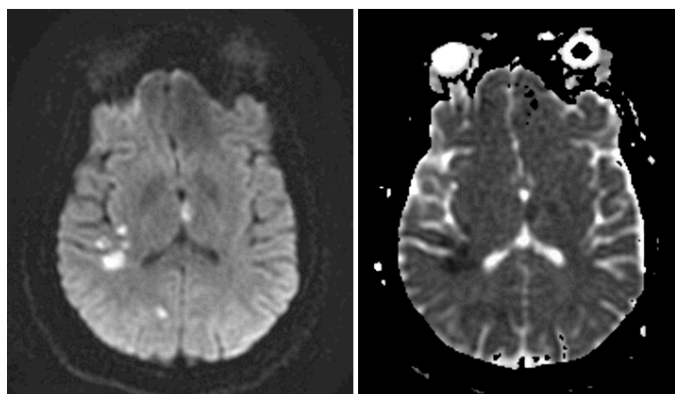


Figure 1: MRI brain diffusion imaging (DWI left, ADC on right) revealing diffusion-positive strokes in multiple vascular territories.

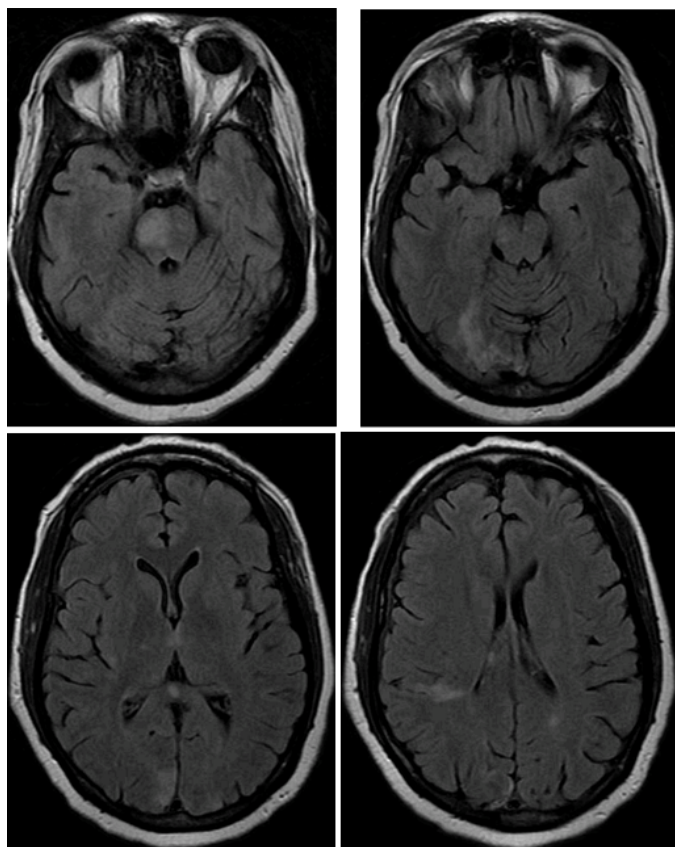


Figure 2: MRI brain (axial FLAIR slices) revealing multiple areas of hyperintensity.

presenting symptoms, however, they are non-specific and made diagnosis difficult. Focal neurological deficits a common presenting symptom due to acute ischemic events, were absent on initial presentation. Subsequent cerebrovascular imaging was consistent with cerebral vasculitis. Clinical features of PACNS are listed in Table 2 [3, 10, 24, 25, 27–29].

Our patient had involvement of the vertebral and basilar arteries, a feature commonly reported with CNS vasculitis [15]. Multiple ischemic infarctions visible on MRI, which occur in 53% of patients, and intracranial hemorrhages which occur in 9% of cases, were found in our patient as well [1, 3]. Hemorrhage is caused by vasculitis-induced blood vessel weakening or aneurysm formation [24]. Thus, our patient can be included in the most ominous subset of patients, i.e., rapidly progressive PACNS.

A literature search was performed to retrieve all publications describing medications used to treat PACNS. The search was conducted in PubMed (1966–March 2016), EMBASE (1980–2016), Ovid and the Cochrane Library, and Google Scholar using the search terms “primary angiitis”, “primary vasculitis”, “PACNS”, “PCNSV”, and “primary cerebral or granulomatous vasculitis”. No language or date restrictions were considered. The FDA website was utilized for identification and review of the latest prescribing information [30]. Included were randomized controlled trials, cohort and case control studies, professional guidelines or recommendations, case reports, case series, and studies conducted on small numbers of patients. Preclinical and chemical screening studies, review articles (other than Meta-analysis or systematic reviews), letters to the editor, editorials, and commentaries were excluded. For each article identified, a second search was conducted both in the databases above as well as by reviewing the bibliography to locate additional articles. We included all reports of patients more than or equal to 18-year-old.

To identify the strength of the evidence regarding treatment for PACNS and evaluate evidence quality, a modified AAN level of evidence classification for therapeutic intervention was employed [17] using a three-tiered system (i.e., strong, intermediate, weak). Strong evidence involved prospective randomized controlled trials or prospective matched group cohort studies directly relevant or inclusion in a Guideline. Intermediate evidence involved conflicting data in randomized clinical trials or cohort studies, case-control studies, evidence in the form of small or pilot trials or case series, or consensus recommendation in the absence of relevant clinical trials and better evidence than case reports. Weak evidence involved isolated or anecdotal case reports, expert opinion or where strong or intermediate evidence failed to include dosages, relapse details, or patient outcomes.

Excluded was secondary vasculitis use or narrative review articles or where the only available literature regarding the use pertained to pre-clinical studies.

Table 1: PACNS- The Great Masquerader- Conditions Mimicking PACNS

Infections Associated With CNS Vasculitis	
Viral (Human immunodeficiency virus, varicella-zoster, cytomegalovirus)	<i>Mycoplasma pneumoniae</i>
Hepatitis	<i>Borrelia burgdorferi</i>
Bacterial endocarditis	<i>Mycobacterium tuberculosis</i>
Acute bacterial meningitis	<i>Rickettsia</i> spp. (Rocky Mountain spotted fever, typhus)
<i>Bartonella</i> spp.	Fungal infections (aspergillosis, coccidiomycosis, candidiasis)
Subarachnoid cysticercosis	Neurosyphilis
Systemic Vasculitides	
Lymphoma (especially Hodgkin’s disease)	Kawasaki disease
Polyarteritis nodosa	Giant cell arteritis
Henoch-Schonlein purpura	Takayasu’s arteritis
Wegener’s granulomatosis	Churg-Strauss syndrome
Antineutrophil cytoplasmic antibody-associated vasculitis	Behçet disease
Hypocomplementemic urticarial vasculitis	
Connective Tissue Diseases	
Neuropsychiatric lupus	Mixed connective tissue disease
Rheumatoid arthritis	Dermatomyositis
Sjogren’s syndrome	Storage diseases
Inflammatory bowel disease	Systemic lupus erythromatosis
Sarcoidosis	Cogan syndrome
Morphea or linear scleroderma	
Miscellaneous	
Drug-induced cerebral vasculitis—thiouracil, allopurinol, minocycline, penicillamine, carbamazepine, phenytoin, methotrexate, isotrentino, heroin, cyclosporine, sympathomimetics such as cocaine, ergotamine, ephedrine, amphetamine, oxymetazoline, phenylpropanolamine)	Graft versus host disease

Moyamoya syndrome	Sneddon syndrome
Reversible posterior leukoencephalopathy syndrome	MELAS (Mitochondrial encephalomyopathy, lactic acidosis, stroke)
Degos disease	Amyloid angiopathy
Fabry's disease	Pseudoxanthoma elasticum
Lipohyalinosis	Postpartum angiopathy
Atypical multiple sclerosis	Optic neuritis
Call–Fleming syndrome	CADASIL
Migrainous vasospasm	Susac syndrome
Whipple's disease	CNS malignancy-related angitis
Rasmussen encephalitis	Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
Radiation vasculopathy	Intracranial dissection
Fibromuscular dysplasia	N-methyl-o-aspartate receptor-mediated encephalitis

Table 2: Clinical and Diagnostic Characteristics of PACNS

Signs & Symptoms, Lab and Imaging Findings	Percentage	Our Patient
Headache	63	+
Cognitive Impairment	50	+
Hemiparesis	44	-
Stroke	40	+
Aphasia	28	-
Transient ischemic attacks	28	-
Ataxia	19	-
Seizures	16	-
Dysarthria	15	-
Blurred or decreased visual acuity	11	-
Intracranial hemorrhage	<10%	+
Amnesic syndrome	<10%	+
Lymphomonocytic pleocytosis	>90%	+
Brain biopsy evidence	75%	+
Mass lesions	15%	-
Spinal cord involvement	5%	-
Elevated ESR	<25%	+
Abnormal brain CT	50-60%	+
Abnormal MRI	75%	+

Table 3: Published Clinical Research of PACNS in Adults

Drug	Results	Strength of Evidence	Reference
N = 163 patients	Favorable response 85% P alone; 80% C + P	-Intermediate evidence	Salvarani 2015
G alone- IV M 1 g (3–17 pulses, median 5), then P 60 mg/day (median) for 0.4–107 mo (median 9 mo)	C + P; increased mortality rate 27% of patients relapsed	- Cohort study (retrospective) (mostly same patients as cohort below- study extension)	
N Therapy	Relapse less frequent in patients treated with C + P versus P alone (OR 2.9)		
72 P + C			
2 C			
51 C PO 150 mg/day (1–33 mo)	Higher disability scores and poor response to treatment associated with increasing age at time of diagnosis (OR 1.44), cerebral infarctions (OR 3.74), large vessel involvement (OR 6.14)		
23 C IV 1000 mg/mo (1–17 mo)			
Azathioprine 100 mg/day (range 100–150 mg/day) for 0.4–76 mo (median 11 mo) + P (6 patients)			
Mycophenolate 2,000 mg/day (median) + P (3 patients)			
Rituximab 2 injections (1 patient)			
N = 101 patients (over 21 years old period)	Favorable response 81%- G alone 85% - G + I	-Intermediate evidence	Salvarani 2007
97 G	Relapses occurred in 25%	-Retrospective chart review (could not conclude if necessary as group may have initially had more severe disease)	
-25- 1 g M			
-72- 60 mg P daily			
49- I			
-46 C PO 150 mg/day or IV 1 g/m ²			
-3 azathioprine			

Table 3: (Continued)

<p>N= 52 - G (all but 1)- 7 as monotherapy (M for 3 pulses 250–1000 mg, then P 1 mg/kg for 23 mo - 44 (85%) C (Pulse IV 0.6–0.7 g/m² Q2–4 wks for 3 pulses, then monthly for up to 12 pulses) - 43 C+ G; 1 C alone - Rituximab- 1 pt 375 mg/m² weekly for 4 infusions (for C refractory disease) - Azathioprine- after C induction- 22 pts; 2 mg/kg/day -Methotrexate- 1 pt after induction -Mycophenolate- 1pt after induction</p>	<p>Favorable response 32/49 pts (65) Relapse 13/49 (27%) Death 3 (6%)</p> <p>Rituximab effective for C refractory disease Patients receiving methotrexate or mycophenolate remained free of disease Neurological damage persisted for 82% of pts</p>	<p>Intermediate evidence Cohort study</p>	<p>De Boysson 2014</p>
<p>M + C IV; 12 mo therapy (no dosages provided)</p>	<p>Initial response to M followed by relapse at 3 weeks</p>	<p>Weak evidence Case report</p>	<p>Rosenberg 2013</p>
<p>C IV + M (twice only-patient lost to follow-up) (dosages not provided)</p>	<p>Beneficial effect; no relapse at 2 mo</p>	<p>Weak evidence Case report</p>	<p>Bajij 2015</p>
<p>N=4; C + G</p>		<p>Weak evidence Case reports (4)</p>	<p>Cupps 1983</p>
<p>Rituximab (2 IV doses of 1 g 2 weeks apart) + P (60 mg/day); P continued for 8 mo- lowered to 20 mg/day; maintenance therapy with methotrexate IM 15 mg weekly for 5 mo + P 10 mg/day</p>	<p>No relapses at 13 mo Methotrexate discontinued because of nausea and vomiting</p>	<p>Weak evidence Case report</p>	<p>Salvarani 2014</p>
<p>TNF blockers- patients resistant to G + C Infliximab 5 mg/kg single infusion Etanercept 50 mg/week (for 20 mo); then 25 mg once weekly (for 8 mo)</p>	<p>Rapid/effective improvement Etanercept arrested relapse No relapses at 34 and 60 mo</p>	<p>Weak evidence Case reports (2)</p>	<p>Salvarani 2008</p>
<p>N= 15 No dosages reported. 8 patients on G, 2 patients also on C (others not reported)</p>	<p>1 patient on C+G improved after 4 mo 1 patient on C+G died after 2 weeks 5 improved; 3 with residual effects such as cortical blindness and confusion</p>	<p>Weak evidence Case series</p>	<p>Lie 1992</p>

C = cyclophosphamide
P= prednisone PO
M= methylprednisolone IV
G= glucocorticoids
I= immunosuppressants

Most of the medications have only intermediate or weak evidence consisting of several small retrospective cohort studies and case reports (Table 3). The vast majority of literature pertains to systemic or secondary vasculitis with PACNS treatment recommendations derived from systemic vasculitis. No clinical trials in PACNS have been conducted. There is one cohort of 101 patients and a second cohort that extends the follow-up and includes some additional patients (N=163) [1, 2]. These cohorts constitute intermediate evidence. All other literature retrieved regarding PACNS pharmacotherapy pertains to weak evidence.

Cyclophosphamide and glucocorticoids remain the standard of care. Cytotoxic agents have been used for CNS vasculitis for decades based on therapeutic protocols in systemic vasculitides, anecdotal reports and cohort studies with favorable results [12]. The use of cyclophosphamide was first described in 1978 for use in secondary vasculitis [31]. The mechanism appears to be autoantibody suppression. However, no clinical trials have been conducted and it is unknown whether cyclophosphamide is the most effective and least toxic cytotoxic agent.

There is controversy regarding whether to administer glucocorticoids as monotherapy or to add cyclophosphamide. In 163 patients with PACNS, a favorable response was observed in 80% of patients treated with prednisone and cyclophosphamide versus 85% in patients treated with prednisone alone [2]. Prednisone alone was associated with more frequent relapses but relapses were not associated with rapid therapy withdrawal. It was noted that cerebral infarcts were associated with poor treatment responses. Predominant involvement of medium-sized vessels, as in our patient, may be less likely to respond to glucocorticoid monotherapy [25]. In addition to the presence of cerebral infarcts, large vessel involvement, focal neurological deficits and cognitive impairment are associated with increased mortality [1].

Prednisone should be initiated as soon as the diagnosis of PACNS is made at a single or divided dose of 1 mg/kg/day orally. If the patient does not respond promptly, cyclophosphamide should be added. In life-threatening or severe/progressive cases and/or for disease flares, pulse parenteral methylprednisolone at 1 g for three days may be used but no evidence exists this is more effective than oral prednisone [3].

In addition to controversy over whether to add C, controversy also exists as to whether cyclophosphamide should be given as continuous oral therapy or intravenous pulse therapy and no trials have been conducted to answer this question. The goal of pulse therapy is to minimize cyclophosphamide exposure. In systemic vasculitis trials, intravenous cyclophosphamide was as effective and produced less leucopenia than oral cyclophosphamide in inducing remission [31, 32]. Relapse rates were not reported in either study [31, 32]. In another study, a higher relapse rate was observed with IV pulse use and adverse effects were more frequent with continuous oral cyclophosphamide [33]. However, that study investigated relatively short courses of treatment. There is some evidence that prolonged treatment with low-dose pulse cyclophosphamide for 18–24 months may reduce the rate of relapse [34]. Again, all these studies are in systemic vasculitis, not PACNS.

The pulse dose is monthly infusions of 15 mg/kg or 500 to 1000 mg/m² [24, 35]. The median oral dose of cyclophosphamide has been reported to be 150 mg/day with a range of 75–150 mg/day for a median duration of seven months with a range of 1–33 months [2]. An oral dosage of 2 mg/kg/day is frequently used. While the results of those trials are inconclusive, in other vasculitides, oral cyclophosphamide was successful when given for 3–6 months. Dosages should be adjusted for age and renal dysfunction [3].

Cyclophosphamide may result in life-threatening infections, cancer (particularly of the bladder or secondary lymphomas), hemorrhagic cystitis, and infertility. Bladder toxicity and myelodysplastic syndrome greatly increase with cumulative doses > 30 g [35]. Carcinoma of the renal pelvis was reported in a patient receiving

long-term cyclophosphamide for cerebral vasculitis [36]. Immunosuppression from cyclophosphamide can result in serious, sometimes fatal infections and the degree of neutropenia correlates with reduced resistance to infections. Patients should receive pneumocystis prophylaxis with oral sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim. Other supportive therapy includes antiemetics and normal saline hydration. While plasmapheresis is ineffective, intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) has been successful in some refractory patients [37].

While glucocorticoids remain the standard of care for remission, in patients unable to take cyclophosphamide, rituximab at a dose of 1 gm for two doses administered two weeks apart has been used. A double blind randomized trial in systemic vasculitis comparing rituximab to cyclophosphamide, found rituximab non-inferior to cyclophosphamide for remission induction and more effective for inducing remission of relapsing disease (67% versus 42%, $p=0.01$) [38].

After induction, many advocate switching to a low risk immunosuppressant to minimize cyclophosphamide exposure [3, 24, 29, 39]. The induction-maintenance strategy has been used in secondary vasculitis using azathioprine at 1–2 mg/kg/day [40]. In a recent study, azathioprine was used in 25% of patients for maintenance therapy, following cyclophosphamide induction. However, in PACNS a treatment course for 12–18 months, preferably 18, is used in most patients assuming relapses do not mandate prolonged therapy [3, 21]. Some continue maintenance therapy for 2–3 years [22]. Other agents include methotrexate at 20–25 mg/week, or mycophenolate mofetil at 1–2 g/day once remission has been obtained [3]. Comparison of methotrexate and azathioprine in patients with systemic vasculitis have not shown either to be superior, however, methotrexate does not penetrate the CNS well [29]. Methotrexate dosage should be reduced in patients with severe renal impairment [41].

In treatment-resistant cases, tumor necrosis factor α blockers (e.g. infliximab 5 mg/kg or etanercept 50 mg/week) and mycophenolate mofetil (2 g/day) have been used. A relapse rate of approximately 25% may occur with serial MRI scan or MRA follow-up at 4th–6th week and at 3rd–4th month intervals thereafter [3, 16, 25].

CONCLUSION

Primary angiitis of the central nervous system is a rare but serious disease that presents both diagnostic and therapeutic challenges. Favorable neurological outcome is a realistic goal. Knowledge regarding the epidemiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis and management continues to evolve. Optimal management remains uncertain. Pulse cyclophosphamide treatment and identification of patients to initially receive immunosuppressant therapy and alternatives require further investigation.

Author Contributions

Martha M. Rumore – Substantial contributions to conception and design, Acquisition of data, Analysis and interpretation of data, Drafting the article, Revising it critically for important intellectual content, Final approval of the version to be published

Samantha Su – Analysis and interpretation of data, Revising it critically for important intellectual content, Final approval of the version to be published

Jake Pellinen – Analysis and interpretation of data, Revising it critically for important intellectual content, Final approval of the version to be published

Guarantor

The corresponding author is the guarantor of submission.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

Copyright

© 2016 Martha M. Rumore et al. This article is distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium provided the original author(s) and original publisher are properly credited. Please see the copyright policy on the journal website for more information.

REFERENCES

1. Salvarani C, Brown RD Jr, Calamia KT, et al. Primary central nervous system vasculitis: analysis of 101 patients. *Ann Neurol* 2007 Nov;62(5):442–51.
2. Salvarani C, Brown RD Jr, Christianson TJ, et al. Adult primary central nervous system vasculitis treatment and course: analysis of one hundred sixty-three patients. *Arthritis Rheumatol* 2015 Jun;67(6):1637–45.
3. Rodriguez-Pla A, Monach PA. Primary angiitis of the central nervous system in adults and children. *Rheum Dis Clin North Am* 2015;41(1):47–62, viii.
4. Chetty R. Vasculitides associated with HIV infection. *J Clin Pathol* 2001 Apr;54(4):275–8.
5. Yankner BA, Skolnik PR, Shoukimas GM, Gabuzda DH, Sobel RA, Ho DD. Cerebral granulomatous angiitis associated with isolation of human T-lymphotropic virus type III from the central nervous system. *Ann Neurol* 1986 Sep;20(3):362–4.
6. Nogueras C, Sala M, Sasal M, et al. Recurrent stroke as a manifestation of primary angiitis of the central nervous system in a patient infected with human immunodeficiency virus. *Arch Neurol* 2002 Mar;59(3):468–73.
7. Lie JT. Primary (granulomatous) angiitis of the central nervous system: a clinicopathologic analysis of 15 new cases and a review of the literature. *Hum Pathol* 1992 Feb;23(2):164–71.
8. Bitter KJ, Epstein LG, Melin-Aldana H, Curran JG, Miller ML. Cyclophosphamide treatment of primary angiitis of the central nervous system in children: report of 2 cases. *J Rheumatol* 2006 Oct;33(10):2078–80.
9. Hajj-Ali RA, Calabrese LH. Diagnosis and classification of central nervous system vasculitis. *J Autoimmun* 2014 Feb-Mar;48-49:149–52.
10. Calabrese LH, Mallek JA. Primary angiitis of the central nervous system. Report of 8 new cases, review of the literature, and proposal for diagnostic criteria. *Medicine (Baltimore)* 1988 Jan;67(1):20–39.
11. de Boysson H, Zuber M, Naggara O, et al. Primary angiitis of the central nervous system: description of the first fifty-two adults enrolled in the French cohort of patients with primary vasculitis of the central nervous system. *Arthritis Rheumatol* 2014 May;66(5):1315–26.
12. Cupps TR, Moore PM, Fauci AS. Isolated angiitis of the central nervous system. Prospective diagnostic and therapeutic experience. *Am J Med* 1983 Jan;74(1):97–105.
13. Salvarani C, Brown RD Jr, Huston J 3rd, Morris JM, Hunder GG. Treatment of primary CNS vasculitis with rituximab: case report. *Neurology* 2014 Apr 8;82(14):1287–8.
14. Rosenberg J, Mahta A, Koppula K, Borys E, Kesari S. Cyclophosphamide responsive primary angiitis of the CNS in a 61-year-old female. *Clin Neuropathol* 2013 Jan-Feb;32(1):66–8.
15. Larivière D, Sacre K, Klein I, Hyafil F, Choudat L, Chauveheid MP, Papo T. Extra- and intracranial cerebral vasculitis in giant cell arteritis: an observational study. *Medicine (Baltimore)* 2014 Dec;93(28):e265.
16. Salvarani C, Brown RD Jr, Calamia KT, et al. Efficacy of tumor necrosis factor alpha blockade in primary central nervous system vasculitis resistant to immunosuppressive treatment. *Arthritis Rheum* 2008 Feb 15;59(2):291–6.
17. Lohr KN. Rating the strength of scientific evidence: relevance for quality improvement programs. *Int J Qual Health Care* 2004 Feb;16(1):9–18.
18. Broussalis E, Trinka E, Kraus J, McCoy M, Killer M. Treatment strategies for vasculitis that affects the nervous system. *Drug Discov Today* 2013 Sep;18(17-18):818–35.
19. Carolei A, Sacco S. Central nervous system vasculitis. *Neurol Sci* 2003 May;24 Suppl 1:S8–S10.
20. Cid MC. New developments in the pathogenesis of systemic vasculitis. *Curr Opin Rheumatol* 1996 Jan;8(1):1–11.
21. Salvarani C, Brown RD Jr, Hunder GG. Adult primary central nervous system vasculitis. *Lancet* 2012 Aug 25;380(9843):767–77.
22. Birnbaum J, Hellmann DB. Primary angiitis of the central nervous system. *Arch Neurol* 2009 Jun;66(6):704–9.
23. Bajaj BK, Pandey S, Ramanujam B, Wadhwa A. Primary angiitis of central nervous system: The story of a great masquerader. *J Neurosci Rural Pract* 2015 Jul-Sep;6(3):399–401.
24. West SG. Central nervous system vasculitis. *Curr Rheumatol Rep* 2003 Apr;5(2):116–27.

25. Berlitz P. Diagnosis and treatment of cerebral vasculitis. *Ther Adv Neurol Disord* 2010 Jan;3(1):29–42.
26. ten Holder SM, Joy MS, Falk RJ. Cutaneous and systemic manifestations of drug-induced vasculitis. *Ann Pharmacother* 2002 Jan;36(1):130–47.
27. Alba MA, Espígol-Frigolé G, Prieto-González S, et al. Central nervous system vasculitis: still more questions than answers. *Curr Neuropharmacol* 2011 Sep;9(3):437–48.
28. Schmidley JW. *Central Nervous System Angiitis*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann; 2000.
29. Fauci AS, Doppman JL, Wolff SM. Cyclophosphamide-induced remissions in advanced polyarteritis nodosa. *Am J Med* 1978 May;64(5):890–4.
30. Food and Drug Administration. [Available at: www.fda.gov]
31. de Groot K, Adu D, Savage CO. The value of pulse cyclophosphamide in ANCA-associated vasculitis: meta-analysis and critical review. *Nephrol Dial Transplant* 2001 Oct;16(10):2018–27.
32. Guillevin L, Cordier JF, Lhote F, et al. A prospective, multicenter, randomized trial comparing steroids and pulse cyclophosphamide versus steroids and oral cyclophosphamide in the treatment of generalized Wegener's granulomatosis. *Arthritis Rheum* 1997 Dec;40(12):2187–98.
33. Adu D, Pall A, Luqmani RA, et al. Controlled trial of pulse versus continuous prednisolone and cyclophosphamide in the treatment of systemic vasculitis. *QJM* 1997 Jun;90(6):401–9.
34. Dhaygude A, Griffith M, Cairns T, McLean A, Palmer A, Taube D. Prolonged treatment with low-dose intravenous pulse cyclophosphamide may reduce rate of relapse in ANCA-associated vasculitis. *Nephron Clin Pract* 2004;97(4):c154–9.
35. Jayne D. Evidence-based treatment of systemic vasculitis. *Rheumatology (Oxford)* 2000 Jun;39(6):585–95.
36. Cyclophosphamide Prescribing Information. Baxter Healthcare. [Available at: http://www.baxterhealthcare.com.au/downloads/healthcare_professionals/cmi_pi/endoxan_pi.pdf]
37. Boman S, Ballen JL, Seggev JS. Dramatic responses to intravenous immunoglobulin in vasculitis. *J Intern Med* 1995 Oct;238(4):375–7.
38. Stone JH, Merkel PA, Spiera R, et al. Rituximab versus cyclophosphamide for ANCA-associated vasculitis. *N Engl J Med* 2010 Jul 15;363(3):221–32.
39. Salvarani C, Brown RD Jr, Christianson T, et al. An update of the Mayo Clinic cohort of patients with adult primary central nervous system vasculitis: description of 163 patients. *Medicine (Baltimore)* 2015 May;94(21):e738.
40. Pagnoux C, Mahr A, Hamidou MA, et al. Azathioprine or methotrexate maintenance for ANCA-associated vasculitis. *N Engl J Med* 2008 Dec 25;359(26):2790–803.
41. Langford CA, Sneller MC, Hoffman GS. Methotrexate use in systemic vasculitis. *Rheum Dis Clin North Am* 1997 Nov;23(4):841–53.

Access full text article on
other devices



Access PDF of article on
other devices



Edorium Journals: An introduction

Edorium Journals Team

About Edorium Journals

Edorium Journals is a publisher of high-quality, open access, international scholarly journals covering subjects in basic sciences and clinical specialties and subspecialties.

Invitation for article submission

We sincerely invite you to submit your valuable research for publication to Edorium Journals.

But why should you publish with Edorium Journals?

In less than 10 words - we give you what no one does.

Vision of being the best

We have the vision of making our journals the best and the most authoritative journals in their respective specialties. We are working towards this goal every day of every week of every month of every year.

Exceptional services

We care for you, your work and your time. Our efficient, personalized and courteous services are a testimony to this.

Editorial Review

All manuscripts submitted to Edorium Journals undergo pre-processing review, first editorial review, peer review, second editorial review and finally third editorial review.

Peer Review

All manuscripts submitted to Edorium Journals undergo anonymous, double-blind, external peer review.

Early View version

Early View version of your manuscript will be published in the journal within 72 hours of final acceptance.

Manuscript status

From submission to publication of your article you will get regular updates (minimum six times) about status of your manuscripts directly in your email.

Our Commitment

Six weeks

You will get first decision on your manuscript within six weeks (42 days) of submission. If we fail to honor this by even one day, we will publish your manuscript free of charge.*

Four weeks

After we receive page proofs, your manuscript will be published in the journal within four weeks (31 days). If we fail to honor this by even one day, we will publish your manuscript free of charge and refund you the full article publication charges you paid for your manuscript.*

Favored Author program

One email is all it takes to become our favored author. You will not only get fee waivers but also get information and insights about scholarly publishing.

Institutional Membership program

Join our Institutional Memberships program and help scholars from your institute make their research accessible to all and save thousands of dollars in fees make their research accessible to all.

Our presence

We have some of the best designed publication formats. Our websites are very user friendly and enable you to do your work very easily with no hassle.

Something more...

We request you to have a look at our website to know more about us and our services.

* Terms and condition apply. Please see Edorium Journals website for more information.

We welcome you to interact with us, share with us, join us and of course publish with us.



Edorium Journals: On Web



Browse Journals

CONNECT WITH US

