Pathogenesis and Management of Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS)

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What is Cerebral Venous Sinus Thrombosis?

Clinical characteristics: Thrombosis in the deep or superficial veins of the brain

Incidence: 10-15 cases per million

Mean Age: 35 years

Gender distribution F:M 2.2 : 1

Clinical presentation: Headache, seizures, limb weakness, reduced consciousness/coma

Risk factors: Oral contraceptives, clotting disorders, pregnancy, cancer, infections, surgery

Diagnosis: Contrast CT or MR venogram

Treatment: Anticoagulation, thrombolysis

What are the clinical characteristics of TTS?

- Associated with replication-defective adenoviral vector SARS-CoV-2 vaccines
- Incidence: Estimated 1 case per 100,000-250,000/vaccine recipients
- Age range: 21-77 years (90% less than 60)
- Gender distribution F:M 2.5:1
- Median onset: 10 days (range 5-24 days)
- Thrombotic events: Cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (N=27), DVT/PE (10), Abdominal vein clots (7), Arterial clots (6)
- Heparin induced thrombocytopenia testing: Platelet factor 4 antibody immunoassay positive, Platelet activation assays (variable)
- Platelet nadir: 27,000/µL (range 7-113,000), Fibrinogen nadir: 125 mg/dL (range 40-568), D dimer ↑↑↑
- Progression of thrombosis on heparin, platelet recovery with IVIG

Comparison of thrombotic events after Oxford-AZ and Johnson + Johnson SARS-CoV-2 vaccines

Oxford-AZ SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine Cases

- Median age 40 (range 21-77)
- Gender: F:M 2.5:1
- Onset: 5-24 days after vaccine
- Symptoms: Headache, backache, abdominal pain, visual disturbance, leg/arm weakness
- Thrombosis: Cerebral, Abdominal veins, DVT/PE, arterial thrombosis
- Platelet nadir: 7-113,000
- Heparin-Platelet factor 4 immunoassay-positive
- Platelet activation assay-positive

Johnson + Johnson SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine cases

- Age range teens to 50s
- Gender F:M 8:0
- Onset: 6-13 days
- Symptoms: Headache, lethargy, back pain, abdominal pain, neurologic symptoms
- Thrombosis: Cerebral veins, abdominal veins
- Platelet nadir: 10-127,000
- Heparin-Platelet factor 4 immunoassay-positive
- Platelet activation assay-negative 4 of 5

Pathogenesis of TTS Appears to be Similar to Autoimmune Heparin Induced Thrombocytopenia

Heparin Induced Thrombocytopenia Antibodies Lead to Multicellular Activation of Coagulation

TTS is similar to Autoimmune Heparin Induced Thrombocytopenia

• Laboratory testing consistent with autoimmune heparin induced thrombocytopenia
  • Positive platelet factor 4 immunoassay and platelet activation assays
  • Platelet activation enhanced by addition of platelet factor 4
  • Platelet activation inhibited by high concentrations of heparin
  • Platelet activation blocked by intravenous immunoglobulin

• Clinical course consistent with heparin induced thrombocytopenia
  • Onset mirrors onset of autoimmune thrombocytopenia
  • Thrombosis and thrombocytopenia worsens with heparin treatment
  • Clinical manifestations improve with non-heparin anticoagulation and IVIG

• Etiology of Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia Syndrome is Unclear
  • Does not appear to molecular mimicry between platelet factor 4 and SARS-CoV2 spike protein
    • 0 of 222 patients with SARS-CoV-2 infection have platelet activating antibodies

Management of Thrombosis Thrombocytopenia Syndrome

• Maintain a high index of suspicion for any patient that presents with symptoms of a clot in association with thrombocytopenia after recent (within 3 weeks) administration of the J+J SARS CoV2 vaccine

• Confirm the thrombotic event

• Send testing for heparin-induced thrombocytopenia with platelet factor 4 immunoassay and platelet activation assay

• Consult a hematologist to confirm the diagnosis and rule out other diagnostic possibilities

• Treat clots with a non-heparin anticoagulant

• Treat the thrombocytopenia with intravenous immunoglobulin
  • Avoid platelet transfusions

Questions