Predictors of Severity in Assessing Outcome in Leptospira Infection - An Observational Study

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND
Leptospirosis is a zoonotic disease caused by pathogenic Leptospira species. It may present with wide spectrum of clinical manifestations ranging from asymptomatic infection to fulminant disease that may prove fatal at times. The objectives of the study are to evaluate the clinical profile of leptospirosis patients and identify the predictors of severity in outcome in leptospira infection.

METHODS
A total of 50 patients seropositive for IgM leptospira admitted in a tertiary care hospital from 1st July 2017 to 31st December, 2018, were included in the study and evaluated for various clinical and laboratory parameters.

RESULTS
Out of 50 patients, majority of whom were male, the common symptomatology included fever followed by headache, myalgia, nausea and vomiting. The various complications that developed were acute kidney injury (AKI), meningitis, pneumonia, arrythmia, dyselectrolytemia etc. The total mortality observed was 10%.

CONCLUSIONS
Oliguric AKI, elderly subjects, sepsis and electrolyte disturbances may adversely affect the outcome in a patient with leptospirosis and thus is a pointer to the need for early intervention.

KEYWORDS
Leptospirosis, Asymptomatic, Oliguric AKI, Pneumonia
Leptospirosis is caused by pathogenic leptospira species that belong to the order Spirochaetales and family Leptospiraceae. Its resurgence has made it a globally important zoonotic disease that has a wide spectrum of clinical manifestations from asymptomatic presentation to severe and life-threatening infection. The main reservoir of leptospirosis are rodents especially rats, although other domestic and wild animals may harbour the organism. Human get infected via direct or indirect contact with animals. In leptospirosis, the pathogenesis involves a septicemic phase that last for about a week which is subsequently followed by the immune phase. It is characterized by the development of antibodies and disposition of leptospiro in the urine. During this phase leptospiro may localize in various tissues of the body and subsequently leads to many complications.

Most leptospiro infections are asymptomatic or manifest as flu like illness with fever, headache, myalgia, pain abdomen, conjunctival congestion etc. However, around 1% of the infection may be severe, manifesting as multiorgan failure with jaundice, altered mentation, acute kidney injury (AKI), pancreatitis, hypotension, repolarization abnormalities and various rhythm disturbances. Patients may also have various bleeding manifestations like petechiae, ecchymosis, epistaxis, melena, pulmonary haemorrhage, hematuria etc. Severe leptospirosis may lead to a case fatality ranging from 1 to 50%.

The study was done to evaluate the clinical profile of patients with leptospirosis and identify the predictors of severity in outcome in leptospiro infection.

**METHODS**

It is a prospective hospital based observational study conducted in Silchar Medical College and Hospital, Silchar over a period of 18 months from 1st July 2017 to 31st December, 2018. A thorough history and clinical examination were performed with special reference to anemia, jaundice, hydration status, mentation etc. All febrile cases aged ≥12 years and subsequently found to be reactive for IgM leptospira were included in the study whereas cases diagnosed as malarial fever, enteric fever, scrub typhus etc. were excluded from the study. The laboratory investigations including complete blood count and differentials, renal function test, liver function test, blood sugar, ECG, serum lipase etc. were performed as required in those included for the study. The subjects were evaluated and taken care of during the in hospital stay and evaluated for the subsequent development of various complications. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 20. Continuous variables were presented as mean (± standard deviation). Chi-square test was used for comparing proportions and t test for comparing means. The value p <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

**RESULTS**

A total of 50 cases of leptospirosis with 28 (56%) males and 22 (44%) females were included in the study. Commonest age group affected was 31 to 45 years that constituted 32% of the study subjects. This was followed by age group 12 to 30 years, 46 to 60 years and age >60 years. Most of the cases presented with fever (88%), myalgia (82%) and headache (70%). These were followed by redness of eye, jaundice, nausea and vomiting, reduced urine output, loose motion and altered mental status that were present in 50%, 44%, 42%, 22%, 8% and 6% respectively. The various clinical signs were raised body temperature, conjunctival congestion, icterus, pallor, dehydration, signs of meningeal irritation, tachycardia and bradycardia that occurred in 90%, 54%, 50%, 40%, 48%, 2%, 32% and 16% of the study subjects respectively (Table 1).

**Table 1. Demographic and Clinical Profile of Study Subjects**

| Gender       | Number (%) |
|--------------|------------|
| Male         | 28 (56%)   |
| Female       | 22 (44%)   |
| Age group    | Number (%) |
| 12 – 30 years| 15 (30%)   |
| 31 – 45 years| 16 (32%)   |
| 46 – 60 years| 14 (28%)   |
| Above 60 years| 5 (10%)   |
| Symptomatology| Number (%) |
| Fever        | 44 (88%)   |
| Myalgia      | 41 (82%)   |
| Headache     | 35 (70%)   |
| Nausea and vomiting | 31 (42%) |
| Redness of Eye| 25 (50%) |
| Jaundice     | 22 (44%)   |
| Reduced Urine Output | 11 (22%) |
| Altered Mental Status | 3 (6%) |
| Loose Motion | 4 (8%)     |
| Clinical Signs| Number (%) |
| Raised Body Temperature | 45 (90%) |
| Conjunctival Congestion | 27 (54%) |
| Icterus      | 25 (50%)   |
| Pallor       | 20 (40%)   |
| Dehydration  | 24 (48%)   |
| Signs of Meningeal Imitation | 1 (2%) |
| Tachycardia  | 16 (32%)   |
| Bradycardia  | 3 (6%)     |

**Table 2. Contributors to Longer Hospital Stay**

|             | HD       | Other Treatment | P value    |
|--------------|----------|----------------|------------|
| Mean duration of hospital stay (in days) | 9.17 ± 1.57 | 6.5 ± 0.96 | 0.008883 |

**Figure 1. Complications in Study Subjects**
The various complications that developed among the study subjects during the hospital stay were pneumonia in 6 (12%), oliguric AKI in 15 (30%), non-oliguric AKI in 13 (26%), metabolic acidosis in 14 (28%), thrombocytopenia in 11 (22%), hyperbilirubinemia in 21 (42%), hyperkalemia in 18 (36%), hypokalemia in 14 (28%), hyponatremia in 16 (32%), arrhythmia in 10 (20%) and meningitis in 1 (2%) (figure 1). As a part of conservative treatment among those who developed AKI, 16 patients underwent haemodialysis (HD) (12 oliguric AKI and 4 non-oliguric AKI). The mean duration of hospital stay was significantly high among patients who required HD. Intensive care unit admissions were significantly higher among patients with pneumonia and arrhythmia with p value 0.046543 and 0.000618 respectively (table 2 and figure 2). A total of 5 (10%) of the study subjects expired and 45 (90%) recovered and subsequently discharged (figure 3). Out of 5 patients who expired, 4 patients had oliguric AKI and 1 patient had pneumonia. Among 4 oliguric AKI patients who succumbed to ailment, 1 received haemodialysis (HD) and 3 expired before they could be put for HD.

On evaluation, it was found that the mean serum creatinine, mean serum potassium and acidic blood picture were significantly higher among those who expired compared to the survivors. Also, those aged >60 years contributed significantly to mortality. Serum sodium, bilirubin and platelet count, presence of pneumonia and meningitis did not vary significantly between the two groups (Table 3).

### DISCUSSION

In the present study, a total of 50 cases of leptospirosis with 28 (56%) males and 22 (44%) females were included. Similarly, males predominated the picture in the study of Dr. Dayamani B et al3 who observed that out of total 104 cases, 52.88% were males and 47.11% were females. In the present study, 32% of the study subjects were aged between 31 to 45 years, 30% were in age group 12 to 30 years, and 28% were in 46 to 60 years age group whereas only 10% were aged more than 60 years. The findings of this study corroborated with the observations by Dr. Dayamani B et al3 where the most common age group to be affected was 31 to 40 years and it contributed to 27.88% of the study subjects. In the present study, most of the cases presented with fever (88%), myalgia (82%) and headache (70%) followed by redness of eye, jaundice, nausea and vomiting, reduced urine output, loose motion and altered mental status. In study by V. Chauhan et al,4 fever was the most common presentation and was found in 100% of the cases. Jaundice was present in 10 (77%), conjunctival suffusion in 7 (54%), meningism in 7 (54%), myalgia in 10 (77%), headache in 12 (92%) cases.

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### Table 3. Comparison of Various Parameters with Mortality

| Parameters | Expired | Survived | p value |
|------------|---------|----------|---------|
| Serum creatinine (mean ± SD) | 6.22 ± 2.75 | 3.03 ± 0.58 | 0.009 |
| Serum potassium (mean ± SD) | 6.24 ± 0.23 | 3.97 ± 0.99 | 0.001 |
| pH (mean ± SD) | 7.04 ± 0.10 | 7.46 ± 0.05 | 0.000074 |
| Serum sodium (mean ± SD) | 124.4 ± 1.02 | 125 ± 1.10 | 0.45 |
| Serum bilirubin (mean ± SD) | 2.98 ± 0.64 | 2.96 ± 2.24 | 0.98 |
| Platelet count (mean ± SD) | 1.94 ± 0.30 | 1.71 ± 0.67 | 0.54 |
| Age >60 years | 3 | 2 | 0.001674 |
| Pneumonia | 1 | 4 | 0.884660 |
26.08% and 8.69% of the study subjects respectively. Metabolic acidosis and hypokalemia were lower in the present study when compared to observations by Virendra C. Patil et al where metabolic acidosis and hypokalemia were seen in 43.47% and 30.43% respectively. Hyperbilirubinemia was present in 42% of cases in the present study and was lower as compared to the study by Padmakumar B et al where hyperbilirubinemia was present in 55.6% of the subjects.

In the present study, AKI requiring HD contributed to longer hospital stay and the need for ICU care was more in subjects with pneumonia and arrhythmia (p <0.05). The mortality observed was 10%. Elderly patients, raised serum creatinine and potassium and low arterial blood pH were significantly high among those who expired. The predictors of severity and mortality varied in other studies. Similar to the present study, Kallol Bhattacharjee et al in their study observed a mortality of 10.7% and among those who expired, oliguric AKI was significantly high as compared to non-oliguric AKI. In another study by Sompong Tantitanawat et al, thrombocytopenia, raised creatinine and bilirubin, raised liver enzymes, tachycardia and hypotension were associated with severe leptospirosis and mortality. However, in the study done by Hua-Kung Wang et al presence of haemorrhage, arrhythmia, shock, jaundice, pulmonary involvement, need for dialysis and ventilation, prior steroid use contributed significantly to mortality. Although AKI was more common among non survivors the result was insignificant.

CONCLUSIONS

Leptospirosis contributes to morbidity and mortality with a multitude of complications. Early recognition, appropriate institution of antibiotics, ICU care and treatment of complications, HD and maintaining adequate hydration may lessen the severity. Encouraging at risk population for use of protective footwear, eyewear etc. at the workplaces is beneficial. Vaccination for agricultural and companion animals should be encouraged.

Limitations

The present study is a single centered one, conducted over a smaller sample size in a fixed geographical area and undertaken for a shorter duration of time. A multicentric study covering a wider geographical area, among different ethnic groups, for a longer duration of time is required to validate the findings of this study.

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