

FALCIPARUM MALARIA IN ELDERLY PATIENTS – OBSERVATIONS FROM TROPNETEUROP AND SIMPID SURVEILLANCE DATA

N.Mühlberger, T.Jelinek, R.Behrens, M.P.Grobusch, T.Weitzel, T.Zoller, J.P.Coulaud, A.Matteelli, S.Puente, J.Clerinx, I.Gjørup, Z.Bisoffi, M.Corachán, G.Burchard, A.Kotlowski, H.Kollaritsch, J.Beran, J.Iversen, M.Schmid, A.Björkmann, C.Hatz, K.Fleischer, W. Guggemos, H.Laferl, J.Delmont, R.Lopez-Velez, J.Knobloch, J.Cuadros, M.H.Schulze, U.Hellgren, A.Kapaun, P.Kern, P.McWhinney, B.Myrvang, S.da Cunha, J.Atouguia, G.Fätkenheuer, B.W.Zieger, G.Fry, T.Weinke; for the TropNetEurop and SIMPID Surveillance Networks

Background of study

Age specific treatment guidelines for falciparum malaria are a permanent matter of discussion. However, empirical data, proofing that the disease is more severe in older patients are scarce.

Objective

To analyse European surveillance data to document the frequency of falciparum malaria in elderly patients, and uncover age-related specifics in clinic and course of the disease.

Design

Cases of falciparum malaria reported from Jan. 1999 to Apr. 2002 by TropNetEurop and SIMPID sentinels were grouped by age (16-59 vs. ≥ 60 years), and analysed for significant ($\alpha=0,05$) differences in symptoms pattern, hospitalisation-, complication-, and transfusion-frequency, and mortality rate. Cases of mixed infection and patients under 16 were excluded from the analysis.

Results

2446 of 2613 falciparum patients met the inclusion criteria. 154 (5,9% of total) were 60 years and older. Older patients complained significantly more often about fatigue, diarrhoea, and genitourinary, and respiratory symptoms, however, suffered significantly less frequently from fever, headache and ENT symptoms. Older patients were less often hospitalised (RR=0.87 95%CI 0.78-0.97), although they more often suffered from complicated (RR=1.95 95%CI 1.24-3.06), and cerebral malaria (RR=3.72 95%CI 1.90-7.30). Exchange transfusions were reported twice as often in the old age group (RR=2.12 95%CI 0.26-17.11). Mortality was four-times higher among older patients (RR=4.25 95%CI 1.42-12.76).

Conclusion

Results of the present study provide some evidence that falciparum malaria is more serious in older patients. Since falciparum malaria in older patients is a rare finding in Europe, sufficient patient numbers for statistical analysis can only be provided by surveillance systems.