THERAPY

Behçet uveitis: good results for IFN- α -2a

Behçet disease is a systemic vasculitis that frequently causes ocular manifestations, including uveitis, macular edema and retinal vasculitis. Interferon (IFN)- α is a highly effective treatment in patients with ocular manifestations, yielding high (>90%) rates of response and remission. In a retrospective study, Deuter *et al.* assessed the frequency of long-term, treatment-free remission in patients with Behçet disease and severe eye inflammation.

The analysis included 53 patients (41 men) at a single institution who received IFN- α -2a and for whom at least 2 years of follow-up data were available. IFN- α -2a was administered at a starting dose of 6×10^6 IU per day subcutaneously for at least 2 weeks, which was tapered to a maintenance dose of 3×10^6 IU twice per week and discontinued if possible, depending on disease activity.

Overall, 52 (98.1%) of 53 patients responded to therapy and achieved remission, of whom 47 were able to

discontinue treatment with IFN- α -2a. Of these 47 patients, 20 relapsed and required an additional course of treatment during a median follow-up period of 6.0 years (range 2.0–12.6 years). The median duration of IFN- α -2a therapy in responders was 22.4 months, and tended to be shorter in women than in men. Women also seemed to have a reduced relapse rate. Visual acuity was improved or stabilized at the end of follow-up compared to baseline in 91 (94.8%) of the 96 affected eyes in the study.

The authors conclude that IFN- α -2a therapy is associated with a high rate of long-term, treatment-free remission, and seems to outperform standard immunosuppressive drugs and tumor necrosis factor antagonists in this regard.

Nick Warde

Original article Deuter, C. M. E. *et al.* Long-term remissions after cessation of interferon alpha treatment in patients with severe uveitis due to Behçet's disease. *Arthritis Rheum.* doi:10.1002/art.27581