Immune-Based Pathogenesis of Sulfur Mustard; Much Still Need to Be Done!

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To the Editor:

We read with interest a published paper entitled “Smad Molecules Expression Pattern in Human Bronchial Airway Induced by Sulfur Mustard; Iran J Allergy Asthma Immunol; 2011 Sep; 10(3):147-54.” Adelipour et al. skillfully explained pattern of Smads molecule expression in airway wall biopsies of patients affected by sulfur mustard (SM). They finally concluded that in SM-induced subjects, Smad 3 and 4 may be involved in airway remodeling processes by activation of TGF-β. This is a useful paper on molecular and proteomics studies but it seems that there are some challengeable points to consider. Some diseases such as alpha 1 antitrypsin deficiency may be a predisposing factor (even though a weak) for pulmonary lesions in individuals affected by the mustard gas. Also, some studies have previously introduced various disorders which can be similar to the SM injury in proteomic and molecular pathways. These confounding disorders will also be the cause of some other diseases such as bronchiectasis or chronic bronchitis. It is not clear whether the effects of mustard gas in these patients are higher than others or not. Therefore, if the authors had excluded other confounding immunological and biochemical disturbances, they would have had more reliable findings about pure SM lung injury.

In addition, bronchoscopic study is a potentially dangerous procedure. Performing bronchoscopic study on the healthy subjects might be ethically debatable on the other hand, to solve the SM dilemma, we should focus on another pathway to resolve its pathogenesis. For this purpose, clinical feature of these patients is a proper guideline for this issue. One of the most important chronic complications of SM injuries is pulmonary complication which is known as Bronchiolitis Obliterans (BO). There are many mechanisms which have been proposed to explain pathogenesis of long-term SM injury and finally, it seems that defect in the cell repair mechanisms is the main problem. Oxidant-Antioxidant imbalance, especially Glutathione (GSH) plays a key role in this pathway. Also, Previous studies demonstrated uncontrolled apoptosis (via both intrinsic and extrinsic pathways) and defective efferocytosis along with ineffective cell repair (approved by raise in tissue growth factor beta (TGF-β)) as the main cellular mechanism which were justified by imbalance in oxidative-antioxidative system. There is evidence for the higher risk of neoplastic disorders among SM injured patients, immunogenomic pathway, regarding to the maintained higher level of TGF-β, enhances the hypothesis that a genetic mutation has probably occurred in one of components of repair pathways. It is necessary to focus genomic studies on mutations which can explain above mentioned immunological, pathological and biological pathway.

REFERENCES

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