



ADVERSE DRUG REACTIONS, INCLUDING SJS, TEN

SQUAMOUS CELL DYSPLASIA IN PATIENTS TREATED WITH HYDROXYUREA: A SERIES OF 4 PATIENTS

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Background: Hydroxyurea is a cytotoxic agent approved for the treatment of various hematological diseases. Although its exact mechanism of action is not fully understood, hydroxyurea is known to be an antimetabolite that disrupts DNA synthesis by inhibition of ribonucleotide reductase. In the skin, it affects the replication of keratinocytes from the basal layer. Adverse cutaneous effects, such as squamous cell dysplasia, occur in approximately 10 to 35% of patients treated with this drug.

Observation: We describe a series of four patients treated with hydroxyurea for a period of at least 10 years, due to myeloproliferative disorders. These patients were referred to our Dermatology Department due to skin lesions compatible with dermatomyositis-like eruption, actinic keratosis and/or squamous cell carcinomas in sun-exposed areas. Premalignant lesions were treated with cryosurgery, laser therapy or photodynamic therapy. Squamous cell carcinomas were surgically excised. In one of the cases, it was not possible to guarantee safe surgical margins, and therefore adjuvant radiotherapy was performed. In two cases, hydroxyurea was suspended and replaced by another drug. In the remaining two cases, hydroxyurea dose was only reduced. Compliance with sun-protective measures was strongly recommended. Three of the four patients remain under close clinical surveillance. One patient died after 18 months of follow-up, due to an infectious complication.

Key Message: Hydroxyurea-associated squamous cell dysplasia is a premalignant condition that clinically resembles the skin manifestations of dermatomyositis and that frequently evolves into multiple and aggressive squamous cell carcinomas. Their early recognition is crucial. This case series underlines the importance of adopting strict sun-protective measures and of regular dermatologic observation of patients treated with hydroxyurea, not only to prevent the appearance of aggressive skin neoplasms but also to enable their early diagnosis.

