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**Maladie réfractaire à 3 mois du traitement d'induction par rituximab
dans les vascularites à ANCA nouvellement diagnostiquées ou en
rechute : une série rétrospective multicentrique française de 121
patients**

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Avertissement

La Faculté n'entend donner aucune approbation aux opinions émises dans les thèses : celles-ci sont propres à leurs auteurs.

Liste des abréviations

AAV	Anca-associated vasculitis - Vascularite à ANCA
ANCA	Anti-neutrophil cytoplasmic antibodies - Anticorps cytoplasmiques anti-neutrophiles
Anti-MPO	Anticorps anti-myélopéroxydase
Anti-PR3	Anticorps anti-protéinase 3
BVAS/WG	Birmingham Vasculitis Activity Score for Wegener's Granulomatosis - Score d'activité de la vascularite de Birmingham/Wegener
CD4+	Cluster of Differentiation 4, marqueur de différenciation T
CD8+	Cluster of Differentiation 8, marqueur de différenciation T
CD19+	Cluster of Differentiation 19, marqueur lymphocytes B
CRP	C-reactive protein
CVE	Cardiovascular events – évènements cardiovasculaires
CYC	Cyclophosphamide
EGPA	Eosinophilic granulomatosis with polyangiitis - Granulomatose éosinophile avec polyangéite
ENT	Ear Nose and throat – Oto-rhino-pharyngé (ORL)
GPA	Granulomatose avec polyangéite
IC	Intervalle de confiance
IQR	Interquartile range - écart interquartiles
IVIg	Intravenous immunoglobulin - immunoglobulines polyvalentes
M3	3 mois
M6	6 mois
M12	12 mois
MP	Methylprednisolone Pulse - bolus de methylprednisolone
MPA	Microscopic Polyangiitis - Polyangéite microscopique
OR	Odds Ratio
PEX	Plasma Exchange - Echanges plasmatiques
PMSI	Programme de Médicalisation des Systèmes d'Informations
RTX	Rituximab
SARS-CoV2	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
VDI	Vasculitis Damage Index – Index de dommage lié à la vascularite ou aux traitements

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Introduction générale

La granulomatose avec polyangéite (GPA) et la polyangéite microscopique (MPA) sont des vascularites systémiques apparentées qui, avec la granulomatose éosinophilique avec polyangéite (EGPA), constituent les vascularites associées aux auto-anticorps anti-neutrophiles cytoplasmiques (ANCA) ou AAV (1). L'EGPA a une présentation et un pronostic différent par rapport aux autres formes d'AAV et sa prise en charge thérapeutique est différente de la GPA ou de la MPA (38).

La prévalence de la GPA varie de 2,3 à 146,0 cas par million de personnes avec une incidence de 0,4 à 11,9 cas par million de personnes-années (39). En comparaison, la prévalence de la MPA varie de 9,0 à 94,0 cas par million de personnes avec une incidence de 0,5 à 24,0 cas par million de personnes-années (39). La GPA et la MPA surviennent le plus souvent chez les adultes âgés bien que ces maladies aient été rapportées à tout âge. Les hommes et les femmes sont touchés à part égale (39–41).

Les organes les plus fréquemment et sévèrement atteints sont les voies respiratoires supérieures/inférieures et les reins menaçant potentiellement le pronostic fonctionnel et vital des patients (1). On distingue habituellement les formes diffuses ou systémiques des formes localisées de la maladie qui concernent exclusivement la GPA et se définissent par une atteinte restreinte des voies respiratoires supérieures et/ou inférieures (ORL et/ou atteinte pulmonaire sans hémorragie alvéolaire) sans autre atteinte systémique (2).

Le traitement des AAV comporte deux volets principaux : l'induction de la rémission puis un traitement d'entretien pour prévenir les rechutes (3). Le but du traitement d'induction est d'obtenir la rémission complète définie par l'absence

d'activité de la maladie (42,43). L'association de glucocorticoïdes et du cyclophosphamide (CYC) est le traitement d'induction standard pour les patients atteints de GPA sévère et de MPA (4). Le rituximab (RTX) déclenche une déplétion en lymphocytes B et une diminution de production des ANCA (5,44–46). Le RTX s'est révélé non inférieur au CYC à 6 mois (M6) dans l'essai RAVE, une étude randomisée en double aveugle (5). Le RTX semble plus efficace chez les patients en rechute et chez les patients ayant des ANCA anti-protéinase 3 (PR3-ANCA) (5–7). Bien que le schéma posologique du RTX utilisé dans l'essai RAVE soit de 375 mg/m²/semaine pendant 4 semaines, le protocole couramment utilisé dans la polyarthrite rhumatoïde de 1000 mg répété après 2 semaines semble aussi efficace pour l'induction de la rémission (8,9).

Malgré la non-infériorité du RTX, la morbidité et la mortalité liées aux complications infectieuses et cardiovasculaires dans les AAV restent importantes (10). Plusieurs essais thérapeutiques ont évalué avec succès la possibilité d'utiliser des régimes à dose réduite (12–14) ou sans corticostéroïdes (15) pour réduire les effets indésirables.

Depuis que le RTX fait partie du traitement standard, les raisons de l'échec du traitement d'induction par RTX ont rarement été étudiées (16–18). De plus, de nouveaux schémas thérapeutiques ou des traitements alternatifs pourraient être envisagés pour les patients présentant un risque de maladie réfractaire au rituximab (15,19). Ceci souligne la nécessité d'identifier les patients réfractaires au RTX afin de proposer un régime d'induction individualisé.

L'objectif de notre étude était de déterminer la fréquence et les facteurs de risque de maladie réfractaire à 3 mois (M3) de traitement d'induction par RTX chez les patients ayant une AAV nouvellement diagnostiquée ou en rechute.

Discussion générale

Bien que le RTX soit un traitement d'induction efficace dans notre étude en vie réelle, 15,7 % des patients présentent une maladie réfractaire à M3 (dont 9,9 % de maladie non contrôlée et 5,8 % de poussée de la maladie). La maladie réfractaire à M3 était associée aux formes localisées de la maladie et à l'absence de traitement initial par MP. Au cours du suivi, les patients présentant une maladie réfractaire à M3 ont eu plus de CVE et d'infections graves précoces. Les patients réfractaires ont également tendance à recevoir une dose plus élevée de glucocorticoïdes à M3. Un tiers de ces patients ont reçu un traitement supplémentaire et tous les patients ont atteint la rémission à M6.

Peu d'études ont exploré les formes réfractaires au traitement d'induction dans les AAV (16–18). Les deux essais cliniques pivots explorant le traitement d'induction par RTX ont analysé le BVAS à M6 avec des taux de rémission allant de 64 % (5) à 76% (20). Dans une cohorte prospective de patients en rechute inclus dans la phase d'induction de l'essai RITAZAREM, Smith *et al.* (18) ont retrouvé un taux de rémission à 4 mois de 90% (défini comme un BVAS/WG de 1 ou moins avec une dose de prednisone de 10 mg/jour ou moins). L'analyse post-hoc du bras RTX dans l'essai RAVE (17) retrouvait 21% de patients réfractaires dont 7% présentaient une maladie non contrôlée à 1 mois. Ces résultats sont proches des nôtres avec 15,7% de patients réfractaires à M3 dont 9,9% de patients présentant une maladie non contrôlée à 1 mois.

Même si la mortalité et les séquelles n'étaient pas associées à la maladie réfractaire dans notre étude et que tous les patients étaient en rémission à M6, nous avons retrouvé une association entre infection précoce, évènements cardiovasculaires (CVE) et maladie réfractaire. Les CVE sont une cause importante de

mortalité dans les AAV (10,21). Le risque cardio-vasculaire à 5 ans dans les AAV a été estimé à 13,8% dans une étude observationnelle incluant 535 patients des essais cliniques du groupe EUVAS (21). La mortalité cardiovasculaire dans l'AAV représentait 15,3 % de la mortalité au cours de la première année et 25,7 % après la première année (10). Plusieurs études ont retrouvé une augmentation du risque cardio-vasculaire au cours de la première année du diagnostic (22,23). Dans notre étude, le taux d'infection cumulé à M3 était de 21%, à M6 de 34% et à 1 an de 38%, ce qui est similaire au taux d'infection dans le bras RTX de l'essai RAVE (36% à M6) (5). La mortalité liée au SARS-CoV-2 avec le RTX était élevée dans notre cohorte et est maintenant bien décrite dans la littérature avec un OR de 4,21 pour les infections graves (24) et un OR de 4,04 pour la mortalité (25). Dans une étude rétrospective récente du même centre (26), 42% des patients traités par RTX pour une vascularite systémique (dont environ 50% étaient des AAV) ont présenté une complication infectieuse dans les 2 ans. Notre étude souligne l'association entre maladie réfractaire et complication infectieuse sévère. L'association entre CVE et infection précoce sévère chez les patients réfractaires peut-être liée à une corticothérapie plus importante chez ces patients ou à une activité persistante de la maladie. Puisque les patients réfractaires présentent un risque accru d'infection précoce et de maladie cardiovasculaire, il est nécessaire d'identifier les facteurs de risque de la maladie réfractaire.

Nous avons mis en évidence que les formes localisées de la maladie étaient associées aux formes réfractaires. Les formes granulomateuses et localisées ont été retrouvées comme facteur de risque de non rémission à 6 mois (16,29–31).

Nous avons également mis en évidence que les patients réfractaires avaient moins souvent reçu de bolus initiaux de méthylprednisolone (MP). Le traitement

initial par bolus de MP est généralement limité aux manifestations sévères d'AAV notamment les glomérulonéphrites sévères, les hémorragies intra-alvéolaires et les complications neurologiques (polyneuropathies, multinévrites, atteinte centrale) afin d'obtenir une réponse rapide (32). Chanouzas *et al.* (33) n'ont pas retrouvé de bénéfice sur la survie globale à l'ajout de bolus de MP au traitement d'induction standard par CYC ou échanges plasmatiques (PEX) chez les patients atteints de AAV graves. En revanche, l'utilisation de bolus de MP était associée à une incidence plus élevée d'infection et de diabète. Dans l'essai RAVE et PEXIVAS (5,13), tous les patients ont reçu 1 à 3 bolus de MP. Dans notre cohorte, les patients qui n'ont pas été traités avec bolus initial de MP étaient plus susceptibles d'être réfractaire à M3. Les patients réfractaires étaient principalement (63%) représentés par des maladies non contrôlées à 1 mois. Une analyse post-hoc de la pharmacocinétique du rituximab et de la relation avec les titres d'ANCA dans l'essai RAVE a montré que la déplétion des ANCA était profonde mais retardée (34). L'effet bénéfique des bolus initiaux de MP pourrait s'expliquer par le début d'action retardée du RTX par rapport aux mécanismes non génomiques des corticostéroïdes à forte dose caractérisés par leur action très rapide (<15 min) (35). D'autres études sont nécessaires pour évaluer l'intérêt des bolus de MP dans l'AAV, en particulier dans les formes localisées de la maladie.

Les patients traités par RTX 1000 mg répété après 2 semaines avaient tendance à présenter une maladie réfractaire à M3 ($p=0.2$) et ce résultat était significatif dans l'analyse du sous-groupe GPA ($p=0.026$). Les principaux essais sur le traitement d'induction par RTX ont utilisé le schéma d'injection hebdomadaire (5,20). Bien que le schéma à quatre doses donne lieu à une dose totale plus élevée (2,5-3 g), aucune étude de dosage n'a été réalisée dans la GPA pour déterminer le

protocole optimal. Aries *et al.* (36) ont testé le RTX à des doses plus faibles (375 mg/m²/4 semaines) dans la GPA et n'ont objectivé aucun changement dans les titres ANCA ni aucune amélioration clinique malgré la déplétion en lymphocytes B. La comparaison des régimes d'induction par RTX dans une méta-analyse n'a révélé aucune différence significative en terme d'efficacité et de sécurité à M6 (9). Nos données suggèrent qu'un régime hebdomadaire de RTX devrait être préféré dans la GPA, en particulier dans la forme localisée de la maladie.

Plusieurs essais thérapeutiques ont démontré l'efficacité d'un traitement par glucocorticoïdes à dose réduite pour l'induction des AAV sévères et non sévères et leurs avantages sur la réduction des effets secondaires y compris les infections (12,13,18). Cependant ces essais présentent une hétérogénéité importante en ce qui concerne la population de patients, le type d'AAV et le régime de réduction de la prednisone. Dans l'essai international PEXIVAS (13) qui étudiait une population d'AAV sévères avec atteinte rénale, bien que le schéma dose réduite se soit avéré non inférieur au schéma standard sur le critère d'évaluation principal (décès toutes causes confondues ou insuffisance rénale terminale), une analyse en sous-groupe du bras RTX a montré une tendance à l'infériorité (OR 1,86 IC 95 % 0,83-4,14). Dans l'étude LoVas (14) comparant un régime de glucocorticoïdes à forte ou faible dose associé au RTX dans une population de patients asiatiques avec une majorité de patient MPO-ANCA, le régime à faible dose était non-inférieur pour la rémission à M6. Les infections graves étaient moins fréquentes dans le groupe à dose réduite (7,2%) que dans le groupe à dose élevée (20,0%). Nous avons étudié la réduction de la dose de prednisone dans notre cohorte. Cependant, en raison de la nature rétrospective de notre étude, nous n'avons pu définir un schéma de prednisone à dose réduite que sur la base d'une réduction de la prednisone à partir du huitième

jour de traitement. Les patients présentant une maladie réfractaire à M3 avaient tendance à être traités plus souvent avec un schéma de prednisone à dose réduite ($p=0.080$) et les patients ayant développé des infections sévères avaient une dose de prednisone plus élevée à M3.

Tous les patients dont la maladie n'était pas contrôlée dans l'essai RAVE (5) ont reçu du CYC pour les manifestations graves (glomérulonéphrite, hémorragie alvéolaire) mais aussi pour les manifestations mineures comme la présence de nodules pulmonaires ou d'hématurie. Dans notre étude de cohorte en vie réelle, les patients présentant des manifestations mineures (ORL, hématurie) n'ont pas reçu de traitement immunosuppresseur et ont obtenu une rémission à M6. Dans notre cohorte, un traitement supplémentaire par CYC, immunoglobulines polyvalentes (IVIg) ou PEX a été initié chez les patients présentant des manifestations sévères avec succès.

Nos données suggèrent que l'augmentation des glucocorticoïdes n'est pas un traitement optimal en cas de maladie réfractaire compte tenu du risque infectieux et cardiovasculaire accru déjà élevé chez ces patients et que d'autres approches devraient être explorées comme les IVIg (37) ou l'avacopan (15), en particulier dans les formes localisées de la maladie.

La principale limite de notre étude concerne sa nature rétrospective, en particulier en ce qui concerne l'évaluation de l'activité de la maladie par rapport aux séquelles et la détermination de la dose cumulée de glucocorticoïdes réellement reçue. De plus, en raison du nombre limité d'événements, aucune analyse multivariée n'a pu être réalisée et les formes localisées, l'absence de bolus de MP et le régime RTX associés à la maladie réfractaire pourraient être liés. De plus, nous avons environ 16% de données manquantes concernant le schéma de prednisone

dose réduite. Les principales forces de cette étude sont l'inclusion de tous les patients consécutifs non sélectionnés atteints d'AAV sur une période de 10 ans dans les trois principaux centres experts du nord de la France ce qui nous a permis d'avoir une cohorte homogène et bien phénotypée.

En conclusion, notre étude retrouve environ un sixième des patients réfractaires à M3 du traitement d'induction par RTX. Ces patients présentaient plus souvent une forme localisée de la maladie et étaient moins souvent traités par MP. Le principal défi du traitement des patients réfractaires consiste non seulement à obtenir une rémission mais aussi à réduire le risque de complications cardiovasculaires et infectieuses. Dans ce contexte, les alternatives au traitement par glucocorticoïdes semblent intéressantes.

Refractory disease at 3 months of induction therapy with rituximab in newly diagnosed or relapsing ANCA associated vasculitis: a French multicenter retrospective series of 121 patients

Abstract

Objective: To evaluate refractory disease at 3 months (M3) of induction therapy with rituximab (RTX) in antineutrophil cytoplasmic antibody (ANCA) associated vasculitis (AAV).

Patients and methods: Multicenter French retrospective study conducted between 2010 and 2020 including patients with newly diagnosed or relapsing patients with either granulomatosis with polyangiitis or microscopic polyangiitis having received induction therapy with RTX. Primary endpoint was the presence of refractory disease at M3 defined as uncontrolled disease (worsening feature on the BVAS/WG 1 month after RTX induction) or disease flare (increase in BVAS/WG of ≥ 1 point after the first month of therapy and before M3).

Results: The study included 121 patients. Nineteen (15.7%) had refractory disease at M3 with no difference in baseline demographic characteristics, vasculitis type, ANCA type, disease status or organ involvement. Patients with refractory disease at M3 had a greater proportion of localized form of the disease (42% vs 18%, $p=0.03$) and were less often treated by initial pulse methylprednisolone (MP) (26% vs 58%, $p=0.011$). Out of the 19 patients with refractory disease seven received additional

immunosuppressive therapy. All patients were in remission at 6 months. Patients with refractory disease had more serious infectious events at M3 and more late cardiovascular events (CVE). Importantly, SARS-CoV-2 infections accounted for half of the mortality related to infections.

Conclusion: Our study shows that 15.7% of patients have refractory disease at M3. Patients with refractory disease had more often localized form of the disease and were less treated by initial pulse MP.

Introduction

ANCA-associated vasculitis (AAV) are a group of necrotizing vasculitis, predominantly affecting small vessels, including granulomatosis with polyangiitis (GPA) and microscopic polyangiitis (MPA). The most frequently and severely affected organs are the upper and lower respiratory tract and the kidneys, potentially threatening the functional and vital prognosis of patients (1). A distinction is usually made between systemic and localized forms of the disease, which concern exclusively GPA and are defined by restricted involvement on the upper and/or lower respiratory tract (Ear, nose and throat (ENT) and/or pulmonary involvement without alveolar hemorrhage) without any other systemic involvement (2).

Therapy for AAV has two main components: induction of remission followed by maintenance therapy (3). The combination of glucocorticoids and cyclophosphamide (CYC) was the standard induction regimen for patients with severe GPA and MPA (4). Rituximab (RTX) has been shown to be non-inferior to CYC at 6 months (M6) and is now currently used as part of the induction therapy in AAV (5). RTX could be more effective in relapsing disease and anti-proteinase 3 ANCA (PR3-ANCA) positive patients (5–7). Although RTX dosing regimen used in the RAVE trial was 375 mg/m²/week for 4 weeks, the protocol commonly used in rheumatoid arthritis of 1000 mg repeated after 2 weeks appears equally effective for induction of remission (8,9). Despite the non-inferiority of RTX, morbidity and mortality related to infectious and cardiovascular complications in AAV remain significant (10,11). It has been suggested that these complications could be related to the use of steroids and several therapeutic trials have successfully evaluated the possibility of using reduced-dose (12–14) or no-glucocorticoids regimens (15) to reduce adverse effects.

Since RTX has become part of the standard of treatment, the reasons for failure of induction therapy with RTX have rarely been studied (16–18). In addition, new treatment regimens and alternative treatments could be considered for patients at risk of refractory disease (15,19). This highlights the need of identification of criteria for RTX refractory AAV in order to propose individualized induction regimen for these patients.

The objective of our study was to determine the frequency and risk factors for refractory disease after induction by RTX in newly diagnosed or relapsing AAV.

Patients and methods

Study design

We conducted a multicenter retrospective study between 2010 and 2020 in the internal medicine and nephrology departments of 3 french hospitals (Lille, Valenciennes, Boulogne-sur-mer). Patients were identified using the French administrative prospective database PMSI (Programme de Médicalisation des Systèmes d'Informations) which contains all discharge reports from hospitals in France. Records were systematically reviewed to verify eligibility criteria. All data were obtained from medical records by the same investigator using a standardized data collection form.

Patients and data

Adult patients with newly diagnosed or relapsing AAV (GPA or MPA meeting the Chapell-Hill 2012 classification criteria) who received a RTX based induction regimen were included (1). Patients were not eligible to the study if they had received prior RTX therapy, had other vasculitis including eosinophilic granulomatosis with polyangiitis or if no follow-up data were available at 3 months after RTX administration.

At the time of RTX administration, the following information were collected: demographic characteristics, type of vasculitis (GPA, MPA), ANCA type (anti-myeloperoxidase (MPO) and anti-PR3), granulomatous disease (defined by the presence of ENT or pulmonary manifestations such as pulmonary nodules, bronchial or tracheal involvement), localized disease (defined by the presence of isolated granulomatous involvement without signs of systemic vasculitis), RTX regimen,

disease status, prednisone tapering regimen which was defined as reduced if prednisone dose was reduced as from the eighth day of treatment, Birmingham Vasculitis Activity Score/Wegener (BVAS/WG), Vasculitis Damage Index (VDI), organ involvement and biological data: C-reactive protein (CRP), creatinine, B cells count (CD19+), serum concentrations of immunoglobulin G (IgG). At 3, 6 and 12 months, the following data were collected: BVAS, VDI, treatment, biological data, infectious events, cardiovascular events (CVE) and mortality.

Outcome assessment

The primary outcome was the presence of refractory disease at M3 defined as uncontrolled disease or disease flare according to Miloslavsky *et al* (17) : i) Patients were categorized as having uncontrolled disease if they had a new or worsening feature on the BVAS/WG or a worsening or unchanged overall BVAS/WG 1 month after RTX induction, ii) disease flares were defined as an increase in the BVAS/WG of ≥ 1 point after the first month of therapy and before M3, regardless of whether remission had been achieved.

Secondary outcomes were infections (defined as clinically or microbiologically documented infections requiring antibiotics), serious infections (defined as infections requiring hospitalization for > 24 hours or requiring intravenous antibiotics), CVE (myocardial infarction, stroke, mesenteric ischemia and limb ischemia) and mortality at M3, M6 and M12.

Statistical analysis

Characteristics of the population were described using median (interquartile range (IQR)) for quantitative variables and number (percentage) for qualitative variables. Comparisons between patients under remission or with refractory disease were

conducted using Wilcoxon test for quantitative variables and Fisher's exact test for qualitative variables. P values of < 0.05 were considered to indicate statistical significance. All statistical analyses were performed using R software.

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in compliance with the good clinical practices protocol and the Declaration of Helsinki principles. French legislation on non-interventional studies requires collecting the non-opposition of patients but does not require written consent. As such, non-opposition was obtained from each patient included in the study for the use of their de-identified medical record data.

Results

Patient characteristics

The study included 121 patients, mostly males (60%) with median age 56 (47, 65) years. Baseline characteristics are reported in Table 1. The majority of the patients had GPA (65%) and relapsing disease (68%). PR3-ANCA were positive in 62% of cases.

Sixty-eight (56%) had a granulomatous disease of whom 26 (21%) had a localized disease. The median BVAS-WG was 5 (3, 7). Clinical manifestations included: renal involvement (62%), pulmonary involvement (50%), ENT involvement (45%), constitutional signs (32%) and neurological involvement (13%). The majority of patients (60%) received a regimen of RTX two infusion of 1g each spaced 2 weeks apart. Half of the patients received initial pulse methylprednisolone (MP) and 14 patients (12%) received Plasma Exchange (PEX). Median prednisone dose was 60 mg (45, 70). Thirty-seven (36%) received a reduced dose prednisone tapering regimen.

The median follow-up time was 8.3 years (3.2, 14.1). The median dose of prednisone therapy achieved at M3 was 15 mg (10, 25). The majority (83%) of patients received trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole and 70% of patients had received pneumococcal vaccine. VDI score at M3, M6 and M12 was respectively 1 (1, 2), 2 (1, 3) and 2 (1, 3). All patients had complete CD19+ depletion at M3. The biological characteristics of the patients at 3 months are listed in the Table 2.

Primary outcomes

Nineteen patients (15.7%) had a refractory disease at M3, of which 58% were severe

defined by BVAS-WG ≥ 3 . Refractory patients included 12 uncontrolled diseases (9.9%) and 7 (5.8%) disease flares, presenting mainly with acute renal involvement. Details of patients with refractory disease are available in Supplementary Table 1. There was no difference in demographic criteria, vasculitis type, ANCA type, disease status or organ involvement. Patients with refractory disease at M3 had a greater proportion of localized form of the disease (42% vs 18%, $p=0.03$) and were less often treated by initial pulse MP (26% vs 58%, $p=0.011$). These patients had a tendency to be treated more often with a reduced dose prednisone tapering regimen ($p=0.080$), more often with a RTX regimen of 1000 mg repeated after 2 weeks ($p=0.2$) and less treated with trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (68% vs 85%, $p=0.10$). They had a tendency to be treated with a higher prednisone dose at 3 months (20 mg vs 15 mg, $p=0.09$).

Subgroup analysis of GPA patients

Since the localized forms were associated with refractory disease, we performed a subgroup analysis of GPA patients. Thirteen of the 79 patients (16.4%) with GPA had refractory disease at M3 (Supplementary table 2).

Patients with refractory disease at M3 had a greater proportion of localized form of the disease (61% vs 27%, $p=0.024$) were less often treated by initial pulse MP (15% vs 55%, $p=0.01$) and were more often treated with a RTX regimen of 1000 mg repeated after 2 weeks ($p=0.026$).

Secondary outcomes

The cumulative incidence at M3, M6 and M12 were 21%, 32% and 35% for infections and 3.3%, 9.3% and 17.3 % for CVE. Compared to patients in remission, patients

with refractory disease at M3 had more CVE (44% vs. 15%, $p=0.013$), similar rates of infection at 1 year (52% vs. 35%, $p=0.6$) and more serious infection in the first 3 months (16% vs 2.9%, $p=0.049$) (Table 3). VDI score was not different between the two groups. The median dose of prednisone at M3 was higher in patients with severe infections in the first three months (38 vs 15 mg, $p <0.001$) and administration of trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole was similar (67% vs 83%, $p=0.3$).

Twenty-four (18%) patients died during follow-up. None of the patients died during the first 3 months. Ten patients died from infectious events including four from SARS-CoV2 pneumonia. Two patients died of uncontrolled disease, five of cancer, one of mesenteric ischemia and six of undetermined cause. There was no significant difference in mortality according to refractory disease at M3.

Treatment in case of refractory disease at M3

Out of the 19 patients with refractory disease at M3, seven (36%) received additional immunosuppressive or immunomodulatory treatment: CYC ($n=4$), PEX ($n=3$) or IVIg ($n=2$). Two patients received both CYC and PEX therapy. Seven patients received an increase in glucocorticoids only. The treatment was not modified in 5 patients because of infectious complication ($n=1$), mild ENT manifestation ($n=2$), acute renal failure on dialysis with a high risk of infection ($n=1$), hematuria ($n=1$).

All patients were in remission at M6. At M12, these patients were either in remission ($n=14$), lost to follow-up ($n=2$), in relapse ($n=2$), or dead ($n=1$).

Discussion

Although RTX is an effective induction treatment in our real-life study, 15.7% of patients still presents refractory disease at M3 (including 9.9% of uncontrolled disease and 5.8% of disease flare). Refractory disease at M3 was associated with localized forms of disease and absence of initial treatment with pulsed MP. During follow-up, patients with refractory disease at M3 had more CVE and early serious infections. Refractory patients also tend to receive a higher dose of glucocorticoids at M3. One third of these patients received additional treatment and all patients achieved remission at M6.

Frequency of refractory disease

Few studies have explored refractory disease in AAV (16–18). The two pivotal clinical trials exploring induction treatment by RTX analyzed BVAS at M6 with remission rates ranging from 64% (with BVAS/WG of 0 and successful completion of the prednisone taper) (5) to 76% (with BVAS of 0 for at least 6 months) (20). In a prospective cohort of relapsing patients enrolled into the induction phase of the RITAZAREM trial, Smith *et al.* (18) found a remission rate at 4 months (defined as BVAS/WG of 1 or less with a glucocorticoids dose of 10 mg/day or less) of 90%. Post-hoc analysis of the RTX arm in RAVE trial (17) find a rate of refractory disease of 21% consisting of 7% uncontrolled disease at 1 month compared to 15.7% of non-remission and 9.9% of uncontrolled disease in our cohort.

Refractory disease and outcomes

Although mortality and VDI score were not associated with refractory disease and all patient were in remission at M6, we found an association between early infection, CVE and refractory disease. CVE are an important cause of mortality in ANCA associated vasculitis (10,21). The 5-year cardiovascular risk in AAV was estimated at 13.8% at 5 years in an observational study including 535 patients from EUVAS clinical trials (21). Cardiovascular mortality in AAV accounted for 15,3% of mortality in the first year and 25.7% after the first year (10). Several studies have found an increase in CVE in the first year of diagnosis (22,23).

In our study, the cumulative infection rate at M3 was 21%, at M6 34% and at M12 38%, similar to the infection rate in the RTX arm in RAVE trial (36% at M6) (5). SARS-CoV-2 mortality in our RTX-treated AAV cohort was high. Increased risk of serious SARS-CoV2 infection with an OR of 4.21 (24) and for mortality with an OR of 4.04 (25) has been described. In a recent retrospective single-center study 42% of patients treated with RTX for systemic vasculitis, about half of whom were AAV patients, developed infectious complications within two years (26). Risk factors for infection have been identified and include CYC, cumulative steroid exposure, older age, pulmonary involvement, increased comorbidity and impaired renal function (27). Our study highlights the association between early refractory disease and early serious infections. The association between CVE and severe early infection in refractory patients could be related to higher corticosteroid therapy in these patients or to persistent disease activity. As refractory patients have an increased risk of early infection and cardiovascular disease, identification of risk factors for refractory disease is necessary

Risk factors of refractory disease

None of the refractory patients in the RAVE trial had anti-MPO (17). In our study, ANCA-PR3 or ANCA-MPO, GPA or MPA, gender, age and renal involvement were not associated with refractory disease at M3. In comparison, female sex and severe kidney disease were associated with an increased risk for treatment resistance in a cohort of 350 patients with biopsy-proven kidney disease treated with glucocorticoids and CYC (28). In our analysis, we found that localized form of the disease and absence of initial treatment with pulse MP were associated with refractory disease at M3. Sub-group analysis of GPA patients yielded similar results.

Localized form of the disease was identified as a risk factor of treatment failure at M6 in several studies (16,29–31). Remission rates of 78% to 84% at M6 were reported in GPA patients treated by RTX, with the presence of pachymeningitis, granulomatous form of the disease and subglottic stenosis as the main risk factors for refractory disease (16,29). Holle *et al.* compared the efficacy of RTX in refractory GPA and found greater efficacy on vasculitic than on granulomatous manifestations (31).

Initial pulse MP treatment is usually limited to severe manifestations of AAV including severe glomerulonephritis, pulmonary hemorrhage and mononeuritis multiples in order to achieve a rapid response (32). Chanouzas *et al* found no overall survival benefit with the addition of initial pulse MP to standard induction therapy with CYC, PEX, and high-dose oral prednisone in patients with severe AAV (33). In contrast, MP use was associated with more episodes of infection and a higher incidence of diabetes. However, the use of pulse MP has never been evaluated in a placebo-controlled trial. In the RAVE and PEXIVAS trial (5,13), all patients received one to three pulses of MP. In our cohort, patients not treated with initial pulse MP were more

likely to have refractory disease at M3. Patient with refractory disease were mostly (63%) represented by patients with uncontrolled disease at 1 month. Post-hoc analysis of RTX pharmacokinetics and relationship with ANCA titers in RAVE trial showed that ANCA depletion was profound but delayed (34). The beneficial effect of the MP pulse could be explained by the delayed onset of action of RTX compared to the non-genomic mechanisms of high-dose glucocorticoids characterized by a very rapid onset of effect (35). Further studies are needed to evaluate initial pulse MP in AAV, in particular in localized form of the disease.

There was tendency for patients with refractory disease at M3 to be treated with RTX 1000 mg repeated after 2 weeks ($p=0.2$) and this result was significant in the GPA subgroup analysis ($p=0.026$). The main trials of RTX induction therapy have used the weekly injection regimen (5,20). While the four-dose regimen results in a higher total dose (2.5-3 g), no dosing studies have been performed in AAV to determine the optimal protocol. Aries *et al* (36) tested RTX at lower doses (375 mg/m²/4 weeks) in GPA and found no change in ANCA titers or clinical improvement, despite B cell depletion. Comparison of rituximab induction regimens in a meta-analysis found no significant difference in efficacy and safety at M6 (9). Our data suggest that a weekly RTX regimen should be preferred in GPA, especially in localized form of the disease. Several therapeutic trials have demonstrated the efficacy of reduced-dose glucocorticoids treatment for induction of severe and non-severe AAV and their benefits on reduction of side effects, including infections (12–14). However, there is considerable heterogeneity regarding population of patients, AAV type and prednisone tapering regimen across these trials. In the international PEXIVAS trial studying population with severe AAV with renal involvement, although a reduced dose prednisone tapering regimen was shown to be non-inferior to standard tapering

on the primary endpoint (all-cause death or end-stage renal disease), subgroup analysis of the RTX arm showed a tendency to inferiority (OR 1.86 95% CI 0.83-4.14) (13). In the LoVas study, comparing a high or low-dose glucocorticoids regimen with RTX in a population of Asian patients with predominantly MPO-ANCA, the low-dose regimen was non-inferior for remission at M6. Serious infections were less frequent in the reduced dose group (7.2%) than in the high-dose group (20.0%) (14). We investigated prednisone tapering in our cohort. However, because of the retrospective nature of our study, we could only define a reduce dose prednisone tapering regimen based on prednisone reduction as from the eighth day of treatment. Patients with refractory disease at M3 had a tendency to be treated more often with a reduced dose prednisone tapering regimen ($p=0.080$) and patients who developed severe infections had higher prednisone dose at M3.

Treatment in refractory disease

All patients with uncontrolled disease in RAVE trial (17) received CYC for severe manifestations (glomerulonephritis, alveolar hemorrhage) but also for minor manifestations with pulmonary nodules or hematuria. In our real-life cohort study, patients with minor manifestations (ENT, hematuria) did not receive immunosuppressive treatment and achieved remission at M6. In our cohort, additional treatment with CYC, IVIg or PEX was initiated in patients with severe manifestations to achieve remission at M6.

Our data suggests that increasing glucocorticoids is not an optimal treatment in case of refractory disease considering the increased infectious and cardiovascular risk already high in these patients, and other approaches should be explored such as IVIg (37) or avacopan (15), especially in localized forms of the disease.

Limitations and strengths

The main limitation of our study concerns its retrospective nature in particular concerning evaluation of disease activity versus damage and in determining prednisone tapering regimen. Considering the relatively small number of refractory patients in our cohort, we were not able to perform a multivariate analysis and localized forms, absence of MP pulse, and RTX regimen associated with refractory disease could be related. Moreover, we had around 16% of missing data concerning prednisone tapering regimen. The main strengths of this study are the inclusion of all consecutive unselected patients with AAV treated with RTX over a period of 10 years in the three main expert centers in the north of France, which allowed us to have a homogeneous and well-phenotyped cohort.

Conclusion

In our study, nearly one-sixth of patients had refractory disease at M3 after induction treatment with RTX. These patients presented more often with a localized form of the disease and received less initial pulse MP. The main challenge in treating refractory patients is not only in achieving remission but decreasing the risk of cardiovascular and infectious complications. In this context, alternatives to glucocorticoids therapy seems interesting.

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ANNEXES

Table 1: baseline characteristics according to refractory disease at M3

Characteristic	N=121	Overall, N = 121	Remission group N = 102	Refractory disease group N = 19	p-value
Age at diagnosis (years)	121	56 (47, 65)	55 (46, 65)	58 (50, 66)	0.6
Sexe	121				0.4
Male		73 (60%)	60 (59%)	13 (68%)	
Female		48 (40%)	42 (41%)	6 (32%)	
ANCA-associated vasculitis type	121				0.8
GPA		79 (65%)	66 (65%)	13 (68%)	
MPA		42 (35%)	36 (35%)	6 (32%)	
ANCA type	119				0.5
MPO		45 (38%)	39 (39%)	6 (32%)	
PR3		74 (62%)	61 (61%)	13 (68%)	
Disease status	121				>0.9
Initial		39 (32%)	33 (32%)	6 (32%)	
Relapse		82 (68%)	69 (68%)	13 (68%)	
Localised form	121	26 (21%)	18 (18%)	8 (42%)	0.03
Granulomatous manifestation	121	68 (56%)	55 (54%)	13 (68%)	0.2
Uncontrolled disease		12 (60%)	0 (0%)	12 (63%)	
Disease flare		7 (35%)	0 (0%)	7 (37%)	
BVAS at baseline	121	5.0 (3.0, 7.0)	5.0 (3.0, 7.0)	5.0 (2.5, 7.5)	0.8
VDI at baseline	120	0.00 (0.00, 1.00)	0.00 (0.00, 1.00)	0.00 (0.00, 1.00)	>0.9
Clinical manifestations	121				
Constitutional signs or symptoms		39 (32%)	31 (30%)	8 (42%)	
Ear, nose, and throat		55 (45%)	45 (44%)	10 (53%)	
Pulmonary involvement		61 (50%)	49 (48%)	12 (63%)	
Alveolar		3 (2.5%)	2 (2.0%)	1 (5.3%)	

Characteristic	N=121	Overall, N = 121	Remission group N = 102	Refractory disease group N = 19	p-value
hemorrhage					
Endobronchial lesions		11 (9.1%)	9 (8.8%)	2 (11%)	
Nodules or cavities		37 (31%)	30 (29%)	7 (37%)	
Lung infiltrate		29 (24%)	26 (25%)	3 (16%)	
Pleurisy		4 (3.3%)	2 (2.0%)	2 (11%)	
Respiratory failure		2 (1.7%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (5.3%)	
Renal involvement		75 (62%)	64 (63%)	11 (58%)	
Acute kidney injury		57 (47%)	48 (47%)	9 (47%)	
Hematuria		67 (55%)	59 (58%)	8 (42%)	
Neurologic involvement		16 (13%)	15 (15%)	1 (5.3%)	
Biological characteristics					
Serum creatinine (mg/l)	121	12 (9, 24)	12 (9, 23)	10 (9, 29)	
CRP (mg/l)	119	26 (7, 69)	22 (7, 56)	55 (6, 104)	
Anemia	118	77 (65%)	63 (63%)	14 (78%)	
Leucocytes (G/l)	113	8.86 (7.00, 11.94)	8.72 (6.97, 11.44)	10.09 (7.07, 14.07)	
Platelets (G/l)	112	290 (242, 378)	285 (230, 381)	303 (281, 373)	
Lymphocytes (G/L)	110	1.2 (0.89, 1.88)	1.2 (0.99, 1.8)	1.06 (0.7, 2.1)	
Treatment characteristics					
375 mg/m ² /week for 4 weeks	121	48 (40%)	43 (42%)	5 (26%)	0.2
Methylprednisolone pulse	121	64 (53%)	59 (58%)	5 (26%)	0.011
Initial prednisone dose (mg/kg/day)	116				>0.9
0.5		13 (11%)	11 (11%)	2 (12%)	
1		87 (75%)	74 (75%)	13 (76%)	
Other		16 (14%)	14 (14%)	2 (12%)	
Prednisone tapering regimen	102				0.080
Low		37 (36%)	29 (33%)	8 (57%)	
Standard		65 (64%)	59 (67%)	6 (43%)	
Plasma exchange	121	14 (12%)	13 (13%)	1 (5.3%)	0.7
Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole	121	100 (83%)	87 (85%)	13 (68%)	0.10

Table 2: biological characteristics at M3

Characteristic	Remission group N=102	Refractory disease group N=19
CD19+ (/mm ³)	0.00 (0.00, 0.00)	0.00 (0.00, 0.25)
CD4+ (/mm ³)	603 (370, 1,015)	476 (342, 566)
CD8+ (/mm ³)	322 (220, 602)	295 (139, 319)
IgG (g/l)	6.70 (4.90, 8.32)	7.65 (6.12, 10.33)
IgA (g/l)	1.35 (0.90, 1.68)	1.36 (1.02, 2.31)
IgM (g/l)	0.45 (0.28, 0.79)	0.35 (0.22, 0.74)

Median (IQR)

Table 3: CVE, infectious events and mortality

Characteristic	Remission group N = 102	Refractory disease group N = 19	p-value
CVE	13 (15%)	7 (44%)	0.013
Infection	36 (35%)	10 (52%)	0.6
Infection at M3	21 (21%)	5 (26%)	0.6
Infection at M6	33 (32%)	8 (42%)	
Infection at M12	36 (35%)	10 (52%)	
Serious infection	6 (6.6%)	4 (21%)	0.068
Serious infection at M3	3 (2.9%)	3 (16%)	0.049
Serious infection at M6	5 (4.9%)	3 (16%)	
Serious infection at M12	6 (6.6%)	4 (21%)	
VDI			
VDI à M3	1.00 (1.00, 2.75)	1.00 (0.00, 1.50)	0.088
VDI à M6	1.50 (1.00, 3.00)	2.00 (1.00, 3.00)	
VDI à M12	2.00 (1.00, 3.00)	2.00 (1.00, 3.00)	
Death	19 (19%)	5 (26%)	0.5

n (%); Median (IQR)

Supplementary Table 1: characteristics of patients with refractory disease

Patient	RTX regimen	AAV type and ANCA	Relapse	BVAS	VDI	Clinical manifestations at baseline	Localized form	Methylprednisolone pulse	BVAS M3	Uncontrolled disease	Disease flares	Clinical manifestations at M3	Treatment	Status at 6 and 12 months
1	1g J1-J15	GPA-PR3	Yes	8	3	Arthralgia, fever, epistaxis, acute kidney failure (AKI), purpura	No	No	4	Yes	No	AKI, fever	Increased corticosteroid therapy	Remission at M6 and M12
2	375 mg/m ² /w	MPA-PR3	Yes	10	1	Arthralgia, scleritis, pulmonary infiltrate, Alveolar hemorrhage (AH), respiratory failure (RF), hematuria, AKI	No	No	4	No	Yes	AKI, hematuria	Increased corticosteroid therapy	Remission at M6 and M12
3	1g J1-J15	MPA-PR3	Yes	7	3	Arthralgia, episcleritis, pleural effusion, hematuria, AKI	No	No	1	No	Yes	Nasal crusting	Increased corticosteroid therapy	Remission at M6 and relapse at M12
4	375 mg/m ² /w	GPA-PR3	No	3	0	Hematuria, arthritis, uveitis	No	Yes	1	Yes	No	Hematuria	No therapeutic increments	Remission at M6 and M12
5	1g J1-J15	GPA-PR3	Yes	3	0	Nasal crusting, sinusitis, pulmonary nodules	Yes	No	5	No	Yes	AKI, hematuria	IVIg and increased corticosteroid therapy	Remission at M6 and M12

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6	1g J1-J15	GPA-PR3	Yes	3	0	Fever, pulmonary nodules, retro-orbital inflammatory tumors	Yes	No	2	No	Yes	Fever, increased pulmonary nodules	Increased corticosteroid therapy	Remission at M6 and M12
7	1g J1-J15	GPA-MPO	Yes	2	3	Fever, pulmonary nodules	Yes	No	2	Yes	No	Fever, pulmonary nodules	Increased corticosteroid therapy	Lost of follow up
8	375 mg/m ² /w	MPA-MPO	No	9	0	Arthralgia, purpura, AKI, hematuria	No	Yes	10	Yes	No	AKI, Alveolar hemorrhage	Increased corticosteroid therapy, PEX and CYC (x6)	Remission at M6 and M12
9	1g J1-J15	MPA-MPO	No	11	0	Gangrene, pulmonary infiltrate, hematuria, AKI	No	Yes	4	No	Yes	AKI, pulmonary infiltrate	IVIg	Lost of follow up
10	375 mg/m ² /w	MPA-MPO	Yes	3	0	AKI and hematuria	No	No	4	Yes	No	AKI	Dialysis	Remission at M6 and M12
11	1g J1-J15	MPA-MPO	No	7	0	Fever, pericarditis, pleural effusion, pulmonary infiltrate, AH	No	Yes	6	Yes	No	Sensory and motor neuropathy	Increased corticosteroid therapy, PEX (x6)	Remission at M6 and M12
12	1g J1-J15	GPA-PR3	Yes	2	1	Epistaxis, tracheal stenosis	Yes	No	1	Yes	No	Nasal crusting	No therapeutic increments	Remission at M6 and M12
13	1g J1-J15	GPA-PR3	No	5	0	Nasal crusting, conductive deafness, pulmonary nodules	Yes	No	8	Yes	No	AKI	Increased corticosteroid therapy, PEX (x9) and CYC (x2)	Remission at M6 and M12

14	1g J1-J15	GPA-PR3	Yes	13	0	Fever, sinusitis, pulmonary nodule, AKI, hematuria, sensory and motor neuropathy	No	No	4	Yes	No	AKI, hematuria	Increased corticosteroid therapy, CYC (x3)	Remission at M6 and M12
15	1g J1-J15	GPA-PR3	Yes	2	1	Nasal crusting, sinusitis	Yes	No	2	Yes	No	Nasal crusting, sinusitis	No therapeutic increments	Remission at M6 and relapse at M12
16	1g J1-J15	GPA-PR3	Yes	2	0	Nasal crusting, sinusitis	Yes	No	2	Yes	No	Nasal septal perforation, frontal and sphenoidal sinusitis	Increased corticosteroid therapy	Remission at M6 and M12
17	1g J1-J15	GPA-PR3	Yes	2	2	Pulmonary nodules, sinusitis	Yes	No	1	Yes	No	Increased pulmonary nodules	Increased corticosteroid therapy	Remission at M6 and death at M12
18	1g J1-J15	GPA-PR3	Yes	6	1	AKI, nasal crusting, endobronchial lesions, pulmonary infiltrate	No	Yes	4	No	Yes	Bronchial stenosis, RF	No therapeutic increment for infectious <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> pneumonia associated with bronchial stenosis	Remission at M6 and M12
19	375 mg/m ² /w	GPA-MPO	No	5	0	AKI, hematuria, pulmonary nodules	No	No	4	No	Yes	AKI, hematuria	CYC (x3) and Increased corticosteroid therapy	Remission at M6 and M12

Supplementary Table 2: GPA subgroup analysis, baseline characteristics according to refractory disease at M3

Characteristic	N=79	Remission group N = 66	Refractory disease group N = 13	p-value
Age at diagnosis (years)	79	53 (45, 63)	54 (43, 64)	>0.9
Sexe	79			0.13
Male		36 (55%)	10 (77%)	
Female		30 (45%)	3 (23%)	
ANCA type	78			>0.9
MPO		8 (12%)	1 (7.7%)	
PR3		57 (88%)	12 (92%)	
Disease status	79			0.3
Initial		21 (32%)	2 (15%)	
Relapse		45 (68%)	11 (85%)	
Localized form	79	18 (27%)	8 (61%)	0.024
Granulomatous manifestation	79	49 (74%)	11 (85%)	0.7
Uncontrolled disease		0 (0%)	9 (69%)	
Disease flare		0 (0%)	4 (31%)	
BVAS at baseline	79	5.0 (3.0, 7.8)	3.0 (2.0, 6.0)	0.14
VDI at baseline	79	0.00 (0.00, 1.00)	1.00 (0.00, 2.00)	0.4
Clinical manifestations	79			
Constitutional signs or symptoms		22 (33%)	5 (38%)	
Ear, nose, and throat		41 (62%)	10 (77%)	
Pulmonary involvement		38 (58%)	9 (69%)	
Endobronchial lesions		9 (14%)	2 (15%)	
Nodules or cavities		29 (44%)	6 (46%)	
Renal involvement		38 (58%)	6 (46%)	
Acute kidney injury		28 (42%)	4 (31%)	
Hematuria		35 (53%)	4 (31%)	
Neurologic involvement		11 (17%)	1 (7.7%)	

Characteristic	N=79	Remission group N = 66	Refractory disease group N = 13	p-value
Biological characteristics				
Serum creatinine (mg/l)	79	11 (9, 22)	9 (9, 13)	
CRP (mg/l)	78	21 (10, 55)	55 (5, 111)	
Anemia	77	39 (60%)	9 (75%)	
Leucocytes (G/L)	74	9.1 (7.0, 11.7)	9.0 (7.1, 12.1)	
Platelets (G/L)	73	306 (246-400)	327 (292-376)	
Lymphocytes (G/L)	71	1.3 (0.9, 1.7)	0.965 (0.675, 1.8)	
Treatment characteristics				
375 mg/m ² /week for 4 weeks	79	27 (41%)	1 (7.7%)	0.026
Methylprednisolone pulse	79	36 (55%)	2 (15%)	0.010
Initial prednisone dose (mg/kg/day)	74			>0.9
0.5		7 (11%)	1 (9.1%)	
1		45 (71%)	8 (73%)	
Other		11 (17%)	2 (18%)	
Prednisone tapering regimen	63			0.073
Low		18 (33%)	6 (67%)	
Standard		36 (67%)	3 (33%)	
Plasma exchange	79	8 (12%)	1 (7.7%)	>0.9
Trimethoprim sulfamethoxazole	79	59 (89%)	9 (69%)	0.076

Mean ± SD; n (%);

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Titre de la thèse : Maladie réfractaire à 3 mois du traitement d'induction par rituximab dans les vascularites à ANCA nouvellement diagnostiquées ou en rechute : une série rétrospective multicentrique française de 121 patients

Thèse - Médecine - Lille 2021

Cadre de classement : Médecine interne

DES + spécialité : Médecine interne et immunologique clinique

Mots-clés : Anticorps anti-cytoplasme des polynucléaires neutrophiles, ANCA, vascularites associées aux anticorps anti-cytoplasme des neutrophiles, vascularites systémiques, rituximab

Introduction : Le traitement par rituximab est efficace dans l'induction de la rémission des vascularites à ANCA (anticorps cytoplasmiques anti-neutrophiles) avec des taux de rémission à 6 mois élevés. La fréquence et les facteurs de risque de maladie réfractaire sont mal connus. Notre objectif était d'évaluer la fréquence et les facteurs de risque de maladie réfractaire à 3 mois de traitement d'induction par rituximab dans les vascularites associées aux ANCA.

Méthodes : Nous avons mené une étude rétrospective multicentrique française entre 2010 et 2020 incluant des patients atteints soit de granulomatose avec polyangéite, soit de polyangéite microscopique nouvellement diagnostiquées ou en rechute et ayant reçu un traitement d'induction par rituximab. Le critère d'évaluation principal était la présence d'une maladie réfractaire à 3 mois (M3) définie comme une maladie non contrôlée (aggravation du BVAS/WG 1 mois après l'induction par RTX) ou une poussée de la maladie (augmentation du BVAS/WG de ≥ 1 point après le premier mois de traitement et avant M3).

Résultats : Cent vingt et un patients ont été inclus. Le suivi médian était de 8,3 ans (3,2,14,1). Dix-neuf (15.7%) patients présentaient une maladie réfractaire à M3 sans différence statistiquement significative pour les critères démographiques, le type de vascularite, le type d'ANCA, le stade de la maladie ou les atteintes d'organes. Les patients présentant une maladie réfractaire à M3 présentaient plus souvent une forme localisée de la maladie (42 % contre 18 %, $p=0.03$) et avaient moins souvent reçu de bolus initiaux de méthylprednisolone (26 % contre 58 %, $p=0.011$). Sur les 19 patients ayant une maladie réfractaire à M3, sept ont reçu un traitement immunosuppresseur ou immunomodulateur supplémentaire. Tous les patients étaient en rémission à 6 mois. Au cours du suivi, les patients réfractaires à M3 ont présenté d'avantage d'événements cardiovasculaires et infectieux graves. La mortalité liée au SARS-CoV2 était de 16% et représentait la moitié des décès d'origine infectieuse.

Conclusion : Notre étude retrouve environ un sixième des patients réfractaire à M3 du traitement d'induction par RTX. Ces patients présentaient plus souvent une forme localisée de la maladie et étaient moins souvent traités par initiaux bolus de méthylprednisolone.

Composition du Jury :

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Monsieur le Docteur Thomas QUEMENEUR,

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