WHIPPLE DISEASE: A CASE REPORT

Ćorić M, Šćukanec-Špoljar M, Jakić Razumović J, Majsec D (mcoric@zg.htnet.hr)
1Department of Pathology, University Medical Center Zagreb; 2Institute of Pathology, University of Zagreb Medical School

Whipple disease is a systemic disease which can involve any organ, but primarily affects intestine, central nervous system and joints. It is caused by the bacterium Tropheryma whippelii.

A 55-year-old man, presented in January 2001. with suspected inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Biopsy of small intestine mucosa was performed. Pathohistological analysis revealed shorter villi lined with normal epithelial cells. Lamina propria of small-intestinal mucosa was filled with macrophages containing PAS-positive cytoplasmatic granules. Acid fast staining for Mycobacterium tuberculosis was negative. These findings were pointing to Whipple disease of small intestine. New biopsy of small intestine mucosa was indicated, in order to perform electron microscopy (EM). Electron microscopy showed rod-shaped bacilli (Tropheryma whippelii) in macrophages.

Patient was treated and follow up endoscopy was performed in August 2002. and in December 2004., with no histological changes in small intestine mucosa. On regular follow up control in October 2005. pathohistological examination revealed recurring disease with PAS-positive macrophages.

Soon after that our patient manifested neurological symptoms (confusion, alteration of consciousness) and propagation of Whipple disease in central nervous system was suspected. EM of cerebrospinal liquor and peripheral blood didn't show rod-shaped bacilli. Patient died in January 2006. Autopsy was not performed.