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A TRAGIC JOURNEY: SEPTIC POLYARTHRITIS IN A PATIENT WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS AND AXIAL SPONDYLOARTHRITIS

BACKGROUND:

Septic polyarthritis is a severe and life-threatening complication, particularly in patients with autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and axial spondyloarthritis (axSpA). This case report details the tragic progression of a 44-year-old woman, who developed septic polyarthritis following a corticosteroid injection and self-medication leading to septicemia and multiple locations.

CASE REPORT:

The patient, with a history of RA and axSpA, developed arthritis in the right wrist six days after receiving a corticosteroid injection, which later spread to the right elbow and knees. In an attempt to manage her symptoms, she self-medicated with two classes of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (diclofenac and celecoxib at optimal doses), methotrexate (15 mg daily), and leflunomide (20 mg daily) for seven days. This unsupervised regimen resulted in severe immunosuppression and worsening of her condition.

She was hospitalized and received urgent antibiotic therapy and joint lavage for the diagnosis of septic polyarthritis. However, she developed acute renal insufficiency, complicating the antibiotic management, exacerbating her condition. Septic arthritis spread to multiple locations, including the temporomandibular joints, thoracic wall, lungs, and peritoneal regions. Despite intensive care, her condition deteriorated, and she tragically passed away.

DISCUSSION:

This case underscores the severe complications of septic polyarthritis in immunosuppressed patients. The rapid progression from localized joint involvement to systemic septicemia, renal failure, and widespread infections illustrates the danger of failing to monitor patients after corticosteroid injections in autoimmune patients. Moreover, the patient's self-medication with multiples drugs exacerbated her condition, illustrating the risks of unsupervised treatment in this vulnerable population.

CONCLUSION:

This tragic case highlights the importance of therapeutic education and patient awareness, particularly regarding the monitoring therapeutic procedures and the risks of self-medication, to prevent potentially fatal complications.