

Gonadorelin analogues/menotropins

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Fatal exacerbation of systemic lupus erythematosus: case report

A 29-year-old woman died from a severe neurological exacerbation of systemic lupus erythematosus after the second cycle of treatment with a gonadorelin analogue and menotropin for ovulation induction prior to *in vitro* fertilisation.

The patient had achieved remission of systemic lupus erythematosus and was maintained on a regimen of hydroxychloroquine, methotrexate 10 mg/week and methylprednisolone 8 mg/day. Methotrexate treatment was discontinued prior to induction of ovulation with a gonadorelin analogue and menotropin [*dosages and duration of treatments not stated*]. *In vitro* fertilisation was not successful. One month later, the patient developed severe polyarticular arthritis and deep muscular pain with weakness. Her methylprednisolone dosage was increased to 40 mg/day, but as she wished to continue with infertility treatment, the dosage was then tapered to 16 mg/day and ovarian hyperstimulation was repeated.

One month after the second cycle, the patient developed a severe relapse of systemic lupus erythematosus, requiring hospitalisation. Her symptoms included fever, anorexia, bodyweight loss, malaise, fatigue, dyspnoea and paraesthesia in her upper and lower limbs. Two days later, she was unable to walk and had acute urinary retention.

The woman was diagnosed with transverse myelopathy and received 3 days' treatment with IV cyclophosphamide and pulse methylprednisolone. However, her symptoms showed no improvement and she underwent 2 plasma exchanges. After the second plasmapheresis, the patient died as a result of a presumed pulmonary embolism. A postmortem was not performed.

Author comment: *'In our patient a direct causal relationship between previous hormonal therapy for ovulation induction and severe neurological complications of SLE [systemic lupus erythematosus] should be suspected, and although we think it far less probable, we cannot rule out the possibility that these complications were the result of suspension of MTX [methotrexate].'*

Casoli P, et al. Fatal exacerbation of systemic lupus erythematosus after induction of ovulation. *The Journal of Rheumatology* 24: 1639-1640, Aug 1997 - Italy

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