Treatment of non-invasive amoebiasis. A comparison between tinidazole alone and in combination with diloxanide furoate

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Summary

Tinidazole (40 mg/kg body-weight in one daily dose for five days) and tinidazole (same dose) plus diloxanide furoate (20 mg/kg body-weight divided into three daily doses for 10 days) were compared as treatments for amoebiasis. The parasitic cure rates were 44 and 91% respectively. We cannot, therefore, recommend tinidazole alone in this dosage as a treatment for non-invasive amoebiasis.

Introduction

Tinidazole (Fasigyn) has recently been widely used as an alternative to metronidazole for the treatment of infections with *Entamoeba histolytica*. In a previous study (PEHRSON, 1982), tinidazole was given to a series of patients with chronic intestinal or asymptomatic amoebiasis. When checked by at least three stool specimens taken on different days, one month after treatment, we found a parasitic cure rate (p.c.r.) of 0% (0/14). This should be compared with the results obtained in other studies, showing a cure rate of 77 to 96% (MISRA & LAIQ, 1974; PRAKASH *et al.*, 1974; JOSHI & SHAH, 1975; BAKSHI *et al.*, 1978), using the same dosage schedule but mainly in cases of acute intestinal amoebiasis.

To investigate the reasons for the unsatisfactory response we obtained, which could be due to too low a dose or to a low efficiency of tinidazole in the gut lumen, we carried out a new trial with a higher daily dose of tinidazole and compared the effect of this higher dose with that following treatment with tinidazole and diloxanide furoate (Furamide) in combination. This latter was found to be an effective intraluminal amoebicide (WOODRUFF & BELL, 1960, 1967; WOLFE, 1973), whose mode of action upon the amoeba is unknown. We omitted Furamide as a single regimen, because it is considered to be ineffective against invasive amoebiasis and there is always a risk of developing an invasive form of the disease if zymodeme differentiation of strains of *Entamoeba histolytica* is not performed routinely (SARGEAUNT & WILLIAMS, 1978; SARGEAUNT *et al.*, 1982).

Materials and Methods

During the period of the study, 41 patients were diagnosed as suffering from amoebiasis. All of them were supposed to have contracted their infections abroad, as amoebiasis is not considered to be endemic in Sweden. No cases of acute, dysenteric amoebiasis or diagnosed or suspected cases of liver abscess were included. The patients had not received any anti-amoebic drug during the previous year. Nine of the patients had a concomitant infection with *Giardia lamblia*, two with *Shigella flexneri*, two with *Campylobacter jejuni*, one with *Salmonella paratyphi A*, one with *Hymenolepis nana*, one with *Ascaris lumbricoides* and one with *Trichuris trichiura*.

In a predetermined, random order, the patients were allocated to two groups, 18 being treated with tinidazole alone and 23 with the combination. All were hospital in-patients and kept under supervision during treatment.

Dosage schedules

(1) tinidazole 40 mg/kg body-weight in one daily dose for five days;

(2) tinidazole as above plus diloxanide furoate 20 mg/kg body-weight divided into three daily doses for 10 days.

Approximately one month after the treatment was completed, checks were made, including the examination of at least three stool specimens taken on different days. One of these was examined by direct microscopy of freshly passed, loose faeces induced by a 50% magnesium sulphate purgative and the other normally passed specimens were examined by the formol-ether-concentration technique described by RIDLEY & HAWGOOD (1956). Failure was defined as the persistence of amoebic trophozoites or cysts in any of these specimens.

Those in whom the treatment with tinidazole failed were later treated with the combination of tinidazole and diloxanide furoate and those in whom the combination failed were treated with metronidazole 40 mg/kg body-weight daily for 10 days.

Results

Data on the participants and the results of the checks one month after treatment are shown in Table I. In no case were the side effects severe enought to cause cessation of treatment. Statistical analysis was made, using the chi-square test, and showed a significant difference between the two groups on the 1%-level (two-tailed test) and in favour of the combination. No differences could be found between the response of Swedes and that of the immigrants, or between those infected on different continents (Asia, Africa, South America). The presence of other parasites did not seem to affect the outcome of the treatment.

Discussion

Our results with tinidazole alone (44% p.c.r.), in treating non-dysenteric amoebiasis, are unsatisfactory and differ very much from those obtained in previously published studies by different authors, using the same dosage schedules (77 to 96% p.c.r.) (ISLAM & HASAN, 1975; APTE & PACKARD, 1978) or lower (MISRA & LAIQ, 1974; PRAKASH *et al.*, 1974; JOSHI & SHAH, 1975; BAKASHI *et al.*, 1978). The patients in these studies were, however, mainly cases of acute amoebic dysentery, a factor which may have influenced the results.

A weak amoebicidal effect of the nitroimidazoles on the cyst stage of *E. histolytica* was observed by

Table I—Some characteristics and treatment results of 41 patients with non-invasive amoebiasis

Treatment	No.	Median age (age range) years	Patients with symptoms v. asymptomatics	Swedes v. other nationalities	Parasite-free at check	Parasite cure rate
Tinidazole 40 mg/kg × 1 + V	18	28 (9-68)	11:7	8:10	8	44%
Tinidazole 40 mg/kg × 1 × V + diloxanide furoate 500 mg × 3 × X	23	26 (6-68)	15:8	11:12	21	92%

SPILLMAN *et al.* (1976), but this report was contradicted by BAKSHI *et al.* (1978). Our drug trial was carried out in a country in which amoebiasis is not endemic, making reinfection during follow-up very unlikely, and confirming that the low p.c.r. was caused by "true" treatment failures.

We therefore believe that our poor results with tinidazole alone are due to its ineffectiveness in eradicating cysts in the lumen of the gut, either because of too effective absorption (MONRO, 1974) or inactivation by aerobic organisms as shown by RALPH & CLARKE (1978).

When tinidazole was combined with diloxanide furoate, we obtained a cure rate of 91%, which may be compared with studies by WOODRUFF & BELL (1967), in which they reported a cure rate of 95% in amoebic cyst-passers treated with diloxanide furoate alone for 10 days and WOLFE (1973), who found a cure rate of 83% using the same schedule. It is also noteworthy that all our failures with tinidazole alone have proved to be freed from their infection after treatment with the combination.

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