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Reply to Sharma et al and Saukkonen et al

To the Editor—With great interest we read the article by Sharma et al [1] and the accompanying editorial [2], which address the reintroduction of antituberculosis drugs after drug-induced liver injury (DILI), an area that until now has been informed by scanty data. We would like to bring 2 points to wider attention that are of particular relevance to sub-Saharan Africa, where DILI is common and frequently associated with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection.

In South Africa, patients with tuberculosis are treated according to World Health Organization recommendations, with use of fixed-drug combinations of isoniazid, rifampicin, pyrazinamide, and ethambutol for 2 months, followed by 4 months of isoniazid and rifampicin [3]. The use of fixed-drug combinations has many advantages but poses problems in the management of DILI. Sequential re-introduction is difficult, because individual drugs are often not readily available in district hospitals and nonstandard treatment may be more difficult to explain to staff and patients. In agreement with the results of Sharma et al [1], we frequently find that the same drug combination is tolerated on re-introduction, and we suspect that many of the cases of drug-induced hepatotoxicity were actually due to adaptation rather than hepatocellular injury. In sub-Saharan Africa, the high rates of concurrent antiretroviral therapy and high prevalence of chronic hepatitis B further complicate the interpretation of elevated levels of liver enzymes [4]. Additional research is needed to determine thresholds for discontinuing treatment in various scenarios and to identify safe and practical re-introduction regimens that take into account the problem of fixed-drug combinations. In concert with this, national tuberculosis programs should ensure the availability of individual drugs for use in special circumstances.

Our second important observation is the relatively frequent occurrence in this setting of hyperbilirubinemia and jaundice without evidence of hepatocellular damage or cholestasis. This usually occurs during the first few weeks of treatment and is likely to be at least partially related to the use of rifampicin and its dose-dependent interference with bilirubin uptake [5]. The management of isolated hyperbilirubinemia is not covered by most guidelines, and it is not clear whether discontinuation of therapy is required [6]; on the basis of what we have experienced in our practice, it seems safe to continue tuberculosis treatment. The importance of differentiating hyperbilirubinemia from true DILI needs to be clarified in future guidelines.

The future of management of tuberculosis and HIV infection in high-prevalence areas in Africa is with decentralized, integrated care at a primary health care level. We support the call for further research to inform practical guidelines for the assessment and management of DILI in public health tuberculosis and HIV programs.

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References


Use of Intralesional Voriconazole for the Treatment of Cutaneous Scedosporium apiospermum Infection

To the Editor—Scedosporium apiospermum is an emerging opportunistic fungus that may infect immunocompetent individuals and may cause life-threatening and often fatal disease among the increasing immunosuppressed patient population [1,2]. Although S. apiospermum is a ubiquitous mold present in polluted water, soil, and sewage [2], most cases of scedosporiosis have been described in western Europe, Australia, and North America; the reasons for this localized prevalence remain poorly known [3]. This pathogen is characteristically difficult to treat because of its particular resistance to commonly used antifungal drugs [2], even though systemic administration of voriconazole or itraconazole has demonstrated clinically useful activity [1,4,5]. We report on a case of successful management of cutaneous S. apiospermum infection with a regimen of intrallesional voriconazole as antifungal monotherapy.

A 65-year-old woman presented to the hospital with a 6-month history of multiple papulonodular, painless lesions on...