Myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS) in Central Africans

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Abstract:

Forty two patients who were seen and satisfied the French-American-British (FAB) diagnostic criteria for myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS) over a 6-year period at the University of Zimbabwe's Department of Haematology, Harare, are presented. Their overall ages ranged from 29 to 75 years with a mean +/- SD of 57.8 +/- 11.2 years. Males outnumbered females with a male to female ratio of 1.2:1. Refractory anaemia (RA) occurred in 33.3%; refractory anaemia with ringed sideroblasts (RARS) in 16.7%; refractory anaemia with excess blasts (RAEB) in 21.4%; refractory anaemia with excess blasts in transformation (RAEB-T) in 16.7% and chronic myelomonocytic leukaemia (CMML) in 11.9% of the patients. In 90.5% the disease was primary and in 9.5% prior exposure to myelotoxic agents resulted in secondary MDS. The study reveals that MDS as a cause of anaemia in the African population is usually hidden in the big number of well known anaemias due to rampant malaria, malnutrition and a host of nutritional deficiencies. There is therefore the need to increase diagnostic awareness among our clinicians about the existence of these disorders