

No detection of mycoplasma in 205 conjunctival swabs

Abstract:

Mycoplasma is known to cause pulmonary and urogenital infections in humans. A pathogenicity for the human eye never has been assessed, although they have been observed in the peripheral eye in a few cases of acute and non-specific conjunctivitis, in patients with Reiter's disease and in newborns. Due to the absence of cell walls, mycoplasma is only sensitive to a few antibiotics. Therefore, we presume that mycoplasma has a role in non-specific and chronic conjunctivitis. It is conceivable that in HIV-positive patients the risk of opportunistic colonization of the conjunctiva by mycoplasma is increased. **PATIENTS AND METHODS.** Between January and December 1992, 205 conjunctival swabs of 151 patients were prospectively analyzed for mycoplasma. The group contained 51 HIV-infected patients (94 swabs). A total of 85 swabs were from non-irritated eyes and the remaining (120) from peripherally inflamed eyes, mainly diagnosed as non-specific or chronic conjunctivitis (75 swabs). Specimen were obtained from the inferior fornix conjunctivae by use of a moistened cotton swab, which was directly immersed in culture broth. For subsequent culture, we used a liquid and a solid mycoplasma medium to differentiate *Mycoplasma hominis*, *Mycoplasma fermentans* and *Ureaplasma urealyticum*. In 77 swabs, a second sample was taken, which was investigated at the Institute for Poultry Diseases of the Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich. **OUTCOME.** None of 205 swabs, including the 77 samples tested in parallel, gave positive results for mycoplasma. Six cases were positive for bacteria and five cases for fungi. **CONCLUSION.** In adult patients at the Munich University Eye Hospital with either non-irritated eyes or non-specific and chronic conjunctivitis, no mycoplasma could be detected. With regard to HIV infection, there is no indication that mycoplasma plays a role in opportunistic infections of the conjunctiva.