

Bacteraemia in patients presenting with fever

Abstract:

In three studies, in Ghana and Kenya, blood from 639 patients admitted with fever was cultured. Standard treatments were antimalarials (54-100%) and antibiotics (39-90%). According to the criteria in use, however, only 10-31% had malaria alone; of those who received antibiotics, 66% were diagnosed with malaria, gastrointestinal infections, post-operative recuperations, circulatory problems, central nervous system disorders or FUO, and did not need antibiotics at the first encounter. For those with wounds and abscesses (8%), generalised antibiotic treatment can also be questioned. Bacteraemia was found in 71 (11.3%) patients; in the HIV patients, however, 5 (23%) of 22 had bacteraemia. This is a minimum incidence, since culture techniques were not optimal for the isolation of fastidious microorganisms. The most prevalent organisms isolated were Salmonella, Klebsiella/Enterobacter and S. aureus. Resistance (intrinsic and extrinsic) in the Gram- bacteria was high: 31-100% were resistant to amoxycillin, 0-80% to cotrimoxazole, 15-95% to chloramphenicol and 9-15% to gentamicin. The need for cultures and sensitivity tests for patients with prolonged or undiagnosed fever is stressed. Specific treatment should be given only when infections, whether malarial or bacterial, have been positively diagnosed.