Epidemiological and clinical characteristics of Moroccan patients with Behçet's disease: A retrospective study.

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INTRODUCTION

Behçet's disease (BD) is a systemic vasculitis characterized by oral and/or genital aphthosis with or without systemic manifestations. The prognosis depends on the clinical form of the disease. This study aimed to describe the epidemiological and clinical characteristics of Moroccan patients with Behçet's disease.

METHODS

This was a monocentric retrospective study conducted in the internal medicine department of Ibn Rochd University Hospital Center of Casablanca, covering all patients hospitalized for BD over a 42-year period from (1981-2023) years and included 1571 cases. The study was based on data from the patients' medical records. The diagnosis was accepted according to international criteria

RESULTS

One thousand five hundred and seventy-one patients meeting international criteria were selected, divided into 1108 men and 463 women, with a sex ratio of 2.39. The mean age at onset was 26.29 years and 33.46 years at diagnosis, with the most affected age group being between 30 and 50 years. Clinical manifestations (table 1) included oral aphthosis (99.61%), genital aphthosis (83.92%), pseudofolliculitis (59.37%), dermohypodermal nodules (15.43%), pathergic test positivity (40.24%), joint involvement (42.72%), eye involvement (60.39%), vascular involvement (23.85%), neurological involvement (18.36%), digestive involvement (9.18%). Juvenile Behçet syndrome was found in 5.73%.

Table1: Frequency of Behçet's Disease Manifestations in Our Series.

Clinical manifestations	Frequency	Clinical manifestations	Frequency
Oral aphthosis	99.61%	***Pathergic test positivity***	40.24%
Genital aphthosis	83.92%	***Vascular involvement***	23.85%
Eye involvement	60.39%	***Neurological involvement***	18.36%
Pseudofolliculitis	59.37%	***Dermohypodermal nodules***	15.43%
Joint involvement	42.72%	***Digestive involvement***	9.18%

DISCUSSION

Behçet's disease was first described by a Turkish dermatologist named Hulusi Behçet in 1937, who identified the diagnostic triad of recurrent oral ulcers, genital ulcers, and uveitis. Most of our patients presented with this triad of symptoms. This vasculitis typically manifests in the third decade of life. The mean age of our patients was 33.46 years, which is consistent with that reported in the literature. Behçet's disease predominantly affects males, although the degree of male predominance varies from country to country. Our study showed a male predominance, with a sex ratio of 2.39. This male predominance has also been observed in other African studies, including those from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan regions as well as in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries. The clinical manifestations of Behçet's disease vary. In addition to mucocutaneous symptoms, general signs, such as fatigue and fever, are often encountered. In our series, there were three cases of prolonged fever. In our patients, mucocutaneous involvement was the most common, followed by ocular and joint involvements. Conversely, vascular, neurological, and digestive involvement were less frequent in our series. The findings from this study align with those of previous research on Behçet's disease, consistently identifying mucocutaneous symptoms as the most prevalent manifestation.

CONCLUSION

In this retrospective study, we examined the epidemiological and clinical characteristics of Behçet's disease in Moroccan patients. Our findings confirm the predominance of the disease in males and highlight a varied clinical presentation with a predominance of mucocutaneous manifestations. The data also suggest that the average age of disease onset is consistent with the literature. However, vascular, neurological, and digestive involvement were less frequent in our series.