



Metronidazole Induced Anaphylactic Shock: A Case Report

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Article History:

Received: 8 June 2021

Accepted: 11 September 2021

ePublished: 14 September 2021

Anaphylactic shock is a type-1 hypersensitivity reaction occurring after exposure to foods, drugs, or chemicals and can be accompanied by unfortunate consequences such as death. Among various drugs, antibiotics, especially cephalosporins and penicillins, cause the highest number of hypersensitivity reactions and anaphylactic shocks. Metronidazole, one of the antibacterial drugs belonging to the group of nitroimidazole derivatives, is mainly used in the treatment of anaerobic bacterial infections, as well as prophylaxis for surgical site infections. This drug rarely causes anaphylactic reactions.¹

A 39-year old man weighing 70 kilograms, with no history of allergy or drug reactions, was admitted to a medical center with a chief complaint of abdominal pain and fever. The patient's vital signs at the time of admission were as follows: blood pressure: 120/78 mmHg, respiratory rate: 18, pulse rate: 85 beats/minute, temperature: 38.5 Celsius. Based on medical examinations, the patient had an abdominal wall hernia in the umbilical area and was selected to undergo laparotomy. All pre-operative examinations were normal except for mild leukocytosis. Five hundred milligrams (mg) of intravenous metronidazole at a rate of 5mg/minute (available as a ready-to-use 100 milliliter solution in a single dose bag) was prescribed as the surgical site infection prophylaxis prior to surgery. Few minutes after the administration of about 15 mg of metronidazole, the patient developed a sudden arrhythmia, leading to pulseless ventricular tachycardia. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation was initiated immediately, according to the 2016 CLSI guidelines. The patient was successfully resuscitated after approximately 30 minutes, and the drug was not rechallenged anymore. At the time of this incident, the patient's blood count was within the normal range, without eosinophilia or lymphocytosis. Inflammatory markers were also normal, and he was afebrile, without any organ failure. His blood pressure was 115/67 mmHg with a pulse rate of 85 beats/minute; his oxygen saturation was 98%. Patient had been

intubated and was transferred to the intensive care unit. Two days later, he was extubated with stable hemodynamic parameters. A clear temporal relationship was observed between Metronidazole administration and the onset of symptoms. The patient scored 6 on the Naranjo Adverse Drug Reaction Probability Scale, a ten-question scale developed to help standardize the assessment of causality for all adverse drug reactions. Based on the Naranjo Scale interpretations, the reaction presented by this patient was probably due to metronidazole. These results are shown in Table 1.

Anaphylaxis is a serious, acute and systemic hypersensitivity reaction resulting from the degranulation of mast cells or basophils. As a result of this reaction, preformed mediators, including histamine and tryptase are released. Such mediators are capable of affecting the cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, and other organ systems. Two mechanisms can be considered for degranulation of mast cells: immune-mediated (IgE-mediated, anaphylactic) and nonimmune-mediated (chemically-mediated, anaphylactic) reactions.² Recently, anaphylactic reactions have received more attention compared with the past. However, their occurrence is still underestimated. In adults, anaphylactic reactions are often caused by analgesics and antibiotics.³ The risk of drug-induced anaphylactic reactions usually increases with age and intravenous route of drug administration. Race is also an important factor, with African-Americans presenting with a higher prevalence of anaphylactic reactions.⁴

A literature review was performed in PubMed using the keywords "hypersensitivity reaction" and "Metronidazole;" the relevant results have been summarized in Table 2. There have been several reports of hypersensitivity reactions to metronidazole in the literature. The reported reactions include: allergic contact dermatitis⁵, persistent drug eruptions⁶, respiratory crisis^{7,8}, systemic reactions⁹⁻¹², anaphylactic reaction¹⁰, Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic

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Table 1. Adverse drug reaction probability scale (Naranjo scale).

Question	Yes (score)	No (score)	Do not know	The present case's score
1. Are there previous conclusive reports on this reaction?	+1	0	0	+1
2. Did the adverse event appear after the suspected drug was administered?	+2	-1	0	+2
3. Did the adverse event improve when the drug was discontinued or a specific antagonist was administered?	+1	0	0	+1
4. Did the adverse event reappear when the drug was readministered?	+2	-1	0	0
5. Are there alternative causes that could on their own have caused the reaction?	-1	+2	0	+2
6. Did the reaction reappear when a placebo was given?	-1	+1	0	0
7. Was the drug detected in blood or other fluids in concentrations known to be toxic?	+1	0	0	0
8. Was the reaction more severe when the dose was increased or less severe when the dose was decreased?	+1	0	0	0
9. Did the patient have a similar reaction to the same or similar drugs in any previous exposure?	+1	0	0	0
10. Was the adverse event confirmed by any objective evidence?	+1	0	0	0

Patient calculated scores: 6 (probable)

epidermal necrolysis¹³, severe generalized exanthematous pustulosis¹⁴, and serum sickness reactions.¹⁵ In most of these reports, the main symptoms of metronidazole hypersensitivity reactions were reported as cutaneous involvement and angioedema, which disappeared within a few hours of corticosteroid and antihistamine administration. Generally, the anaphylactic reaction is not a common phenomenon with metronidazole. In contrast to other reports, we have reported a severe anaphylactic reaction requiring cardiac resuscitation induced by this drug.

Skin testing remains an essential tool to diagnose or confirm the presence of an allergic disease in individuals with hypersensitivity reactions. Skin prick test (SPT) is a safe and minimally invasive skin testing method, used to diagnose type I (IgE-mediated) allergies based on medical history and clinical signs. This method detects allergies to foods, drugs, or inhalants; its results provide sufficient evidence for allergenicity and can help confirm the diagnosis of a suspected type I allergy.^{9,10} The results of our study have not been confirmed by SPT. The majority of allergic contact dermatitis cases with topical metronidazole for treating rosaceous acne¹² as well as fixed-drug eruptions, have been verified by Positive Patch tests (PTs). According to the results obtained by patch tests (and other testing methods), there is a possibility of an allergic cross-reaction between metronidazole and other imidazoles, such as ketoconazole, miconazole, clotrimazole, and albendazole⁷. Therefore, the patient presented was advised to avoid taking any of these drugs.

There were important differences between our case and cases addressed in other reports; these include an immediate reaction after the infusion of Metronidazole and the incidence of a sudden hypotension and arrhythmia, leading to pulseless ventricular tachycardia. Additionally, our case was the first report of anaphylactic reaction with

Metronidazole, requiring cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Drug reactions can be managed in three ways: avoiding the offending drug, prescribing premedication, and desensitization. Possible desensitization mechanisms include mitigating the mast cells and basophil response to the allergen and decreasing the production of inflammatory mediators. The risks and benefits of the desensitization method should both be considered and the patient should be involved in any decision-making process, crucial to the patient.¹⁶

Ethical Issues

The patient information kept being confidential to the researchers.

Author Contributions

NA contributed to the member of patient treatment team, the case selection, design of the study and revision of the manuscript. MP and MD contributed to the search databases and extracted data. MB contributed in the extraction of clinical and paraclinical patient data. MP wrote the original draft with input from all authors. MD edited and confirmed the final original draft. BB was the patient's physician. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflicts of interest.

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Table 2. Clinical cases regarding metronidazole induced hypersensitivity reactions.

Author/Year	Patient demographics	Underlying disease	History of drug allergy	Administration route of metronidazole	Symptoms	Reaction severity	Patient outcome
Aruanno <i>et al.</i> ^{12/2020}	45 years old, Male	Gastrointestinal dysbiosis	No history	Oral tablet	Labial angioedema and itching widespread erythematous maculopapular rash	Did not required cardiopulmonary resuscitation	Recovery without sequela
Prieto <i>et al.</i> ^{9/2005}	34 years old, Female	Trichomonal vaginitis	History of Fixed drug eruption due to sulphonamides	Topical	Pruritic, erythematous, blistered lesions,	Did not required cardiopulmonary resuscitation	Recovery without sequela
Añíbarro & Fontela ^{7/1997}	19 years old, Female	Toothache	Facial angioedema and rhinoconjunctivitis due to horsehair sensitization	Oral tablet	Nasal and ocular itching, rhinorrhea,	Did not required cardiopulmonary resuscitation	Recovery without sequel
Kurohara <i>et al.</i> ^{11/1991}	31 years old, Female	Trichomonal vaginitis	No history	Oral tablet	Sneezing, and watery eyes	Did not required cardiopulmonary resuscitation	Recovery without sequel
Weart <i>et al.</i> ^{9/1983}	32 years old, Female	Vaginitis	Tetracycline allergy	Oral tablet	Hives over her entire body, shortness of breath	Did not required cardiopulmonary resuscitation	Recovery without sequela
Tang <i>et al.</i> ^{16/2013}	69 years old, Female	Laparoscopic cholecystectomy	No history	Intravenous	Arthralgia, myalgia, fever, chills, pruritic rash, leukopenia	Did not required cardiopulmonary Resuscitation	Recovery without sequela
Kumar <i>et al.</i> ^{17/2013}	67 years old, Male	Diarrhea	History of an itchy, erythematous oval lesion after taking of Metronidazole	Oral tablet	Pruritus and erythema	Did not required cardiopulmonary Resuscitation	Recovery without sequela
Fernández-Jorge <i>et al.</i> ^{5/2008}	45 years old, Female	Rosacea	No history	Intravenous	Itchy lesions	Did not required cardiopulmonary Resuscitation	Recovery without sequela
Asensio Sánchez <i>et al.</i> ^{10/2008}	51 years old, Female	Gingivostomatitis	No history	Oral tablet	Acute, itchy, vesicular and	Did not required cardiopulmonary Resuscitation	Recovery without sequela

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