

Revisiting Herpes Zoster Ophthalmicus: A case series in Hospital Tuanku Ja'afar, Seremban

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Herpes zoster ophthalmicus (HZO) usually occurs decades after the first insult due to some triggering factors. It typically affects the dermatome respecting ophthalmic division of the trigeminal nerve (V1) and may be associated with keratouveitis. Variation in presentation may require multidisciplinary management. **Materials and Methods:** Medical records of four patients with HZO were reviewed retrospectively. We describe a series of four HZO cases with variable presentation encountered in Hospital Tuanku Ja'afar Seremban. There were three males and one female, age ranging between forty-one to seventy-one years old. The risk factors among these patients were advanced age, long-term use of immunosuppressants, and uncontrolled diabetes mellitus. **Results:** All four patients presented with facial pain and rash in the V1 dermatome, with one patient having an exaggerated rash extending into the maxillary dermatome (V2). Three patients with severe illness required inpatient care while the other patient had frequent follow-ups at the outpatient clinic. Meningitis was diagnosed in one elderly patient with ophthalmoplegia and positive culture of VZV from lumbar puncture, requiring long-term inpatient care and intravenous antiviral treatment. One of the patients developed recurrent keratouveitis and poor healing corneal ulcer. Treatment for him was challenging as the history of immunosuppressant use was initially missed. Extensive rash in V1 and V2 dermatomes was seen in another patient who was buying steroids over-the-counter for gouty arthritis. HZO complicated with severe preseptal cellulitis was seen in one patient who has uncontrolled diabetes. All four patients recovered from their illness, some taking a longer course of healing. **Conclusion:** In our study, the risk factors were advanced age and immunosuppression secondary to medication or uncontrolled diabetes. Clinicians should maintain a high index of suspicion to look for predisposing factors in cases of HZO especially those with atypical presentation. This may prevent sinister complications and aid in early recovery.