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Tuberculosis: The great lymphoma pretender

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Lymphoma and tuberculosis (TB) share common features, thus misdiagnoses are commonly encountered. The Philippines is ninth out of the 22 countries in the world with the highest TB-burden, while lymphoma has age-standardized rates of 4.6/100,000 population in all ages in Manila. This study reports a case of a 24-year-old HIV-negative male presenting with a six-month course of anorexia, weight loss, fever, night sweats and hepatosplenomegaly. Hematologic studies revealed anemia. Bilirubins, alkaline phosphatase and lactate dehydrogenase were elevated, while trans-aminases were normal. Initial chest X-ray showed nodular infiltrates on both lung apices and a negative sputum acid-fast bacilli smear. Contrast-enhanced CT scan of the chest and abdomen revealed multiple tiny, non-calcified pulmonary parenchymal nodules on both lung fields, marked hepatomegaly with multiple nodules in the porta hepatic, retroperitoneal and mesenteric region consistent with lymphadenopathies and splenomegaly with intra-parenchymal cystic nodules. Primary considerations were gastrointestinal lymphoma versus TB. The patient was diagnosed late with severe disseminated TB affecting the lungs, liver, spleen, genitourinary tract and intestines. No anti-TB treatment was started within the patient's six-month course because of uncertainty in the diagnosis, especially in light of the negative sputum acid-fast bacilli smears. Malnutrition, anemia, hypo-albuminemia and an overall immune compromised state contributed to the demise of the patient while undergoing surgery for a ruptured viscus from ileocecal TB invasion. TB is a disease that can be easily controlled and treated. The decision to start empiric treatment with anti-TB medications has a higher benefit versus risk of complications, especially in a patient with a high index of suspicion for the disease.

Biography

Angelique Bea Uy is a Physician from the Department of Medicine, University of the Philippines- Philippine General Hospital. She completed Bachelor in Science in Biology from the same institution before taking up Medicine. She is currently on her first year of residency and plans to pursue further specialization in Medical Oncology or Endocrinology.

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