

Lipid Pneumonia in the Pediatric Age Group and its Complications

Hanaa Banjar, MD, FRCPC*

Objective: Exogenous lipid pneumonia is an uncommon condition resulting from an aspiration or inhalation of fat like material. This condition is considered a common disease in developed countries. Our aim is to present the experience in a tertiary care centre in Saudi Arabia.

Method: A retrospective review of all cases presented to our center over 16 years period (from 1984- 2000). We evaluated the demographic data, the different type of presentations, diagnostic modalities and therapeutic data.

Results: A total of 25 patients, 14 females, 11 males, were seen. Twenty-two are alive (88%) and 3 died (12%). Age at diagnosis was 15 ± 9 month. Period of follow up was 42 ± 56 month. In 80% of the patients, a history of lipid intake through oral route was confirmed in 15 (60%) of the patients for a period of 2-14 month, with a mean of 6.3 month. Chest x-ray showed mainly consolidation in 23 (92%) patients and atelectasis in 18 (72%). The right lower lobe (RLL) was the predominant lobe involved in 20 (80%). The most common complication encountered was persistent atelectasis in 17 (68%), followed by gastroesophageal reflux in 12 (48%). Bronchiectasis was common in RLL in 6 (24%) patients. Pulmonary function tests showed combined obstructive and restrictive lung disease in 3 (12%) patients. Steroid was used in 21 (84%) patients and inhaled salbutamol in 14 (56%). Diseases that are associated with patients with lipid pneumonia were mainly those of asthma in 10 (40%) patients.

Conclusion: Lipid pneumonia is an uncommon disease in Saudi Arabia. Physicians should be aware of this condition in patients with chest infection, not responding to conventional treatment. Steroids may improve the chest findings.