

Northwest London Vasculitis Meeting, Hammersmith Hospital

9th September 2020

Due to the current circumstances, the regular face:face vasculitis meetings have been placed on hold. However the Northwest London Vasculitis Forum were able to arrange a meeting earlier this month – albeit in virtual form. In addition, the opportunity was taken to invite colleagues from the South-West Thames region. Seventy delegates attended the meeting. The session was topical in view of the current pandemic, with three presentations covering clinical cases and the learning points observed over the preceding months. Professor Charles Pusey introduced the meeting and highlighted that it was the first since the creation of the Imperial College Centre of Excellence in Vasculitis Research led by Professor Justin Mason and Professor Pusey.

Dr Elizabeth Whittaker's (Consultant Paediatrician and Senior Lecturer, ICHT) presentation entitled "Paediatric Inflammatory Multisystem Syndrome (PIMS) – an update" covered her experience in defining PIMS, managing these cases and the various associated presentations of COVID-19 within the paediatric population. She described the phenotypic categories observed including those of Kawasaki-like presentation where children would meet the American Heart Association criteria of the condition, as well as distinct hyper-inflammatory presentations, similar to those also seen within the adult population. Dr Whittaker explored some of the similarities and differences between Kawasaki's and that of PIMS secondary to COVID-19, as well as how our knowledge of the former has directed management of PIMS and contributed to a good outcome for the majority of affected children.

Dr Taryn Youngstein's (Consultant Rheumatologist and Senior Lecturer, ICHT) presentation entitled "IL-6 inhibition in COVID-19-induced vasculitis and beyond" included the role she and Dr Whittaker played in establishing the national shielding guidelines and the ICHT compassionate use of biologic programme for COVID-19. Dr Youngstein reviewed cases she had managed as part of the COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines Working Group within the Trust, primarily patients who were excluded from clinical trials due to pre-existing pathology. The cases included a gentleman in his 60s who developed intracranial vasculitis post COVID-19 infection. He was treated successfully with IL-6 inhibition, reflecting the management used in primary large vessel vasculitis. A second case was that of a young man who developed a life-threatening COVID-19-related myocarditis and who went on to make a significant recovery following the addition of IL-6 inhibition therapy. It was recognised that although the role of IL-6 inhibition in the context of COVID-19 is still uncertain, cases such as those described seem promising. The results of the multi-centre COVACTA and Recovery trials may help our understanding of the pros and cons of IL-6 inhibition and those patients who might benefit.

Finally, Dr Stephen McAdoo (Consultant Nephrologist, ICHT) presented his talk entitled "A cluster of anti-GBM disease during the COVID-19 pandemic". He described a series of anti-GBM disease cases managed within the tertiary renal centre at Hammersmith Hospital since the start of the year. Cases described seemed to reflect features of typical anti-GBM disease, including renal biopsy findings. A number of these patients were identified as HLA-DR15 positive, a susceptibility allele for this condition. Dr McAdoo observed that typically the Renal Department would diagnose only two such cases per year of this condition, whereas so far in 2020 they have already diagnosed 3 x more

than this. The presentation of the cases seemed to mirror the COVID-19 pandemic within the UK, with evidence of associated SARS-CoV-2 antibodies in a proportion of the cases.

There was active discussion throughout the session, reflecting experiences across different specialties and centres of those in attendance. The presentation of the cases and the observations made allowed a greater understanding of ways the COVID-19 virus may manifest including an associated vasculitis and approaches to management. Due to the current uncertainties regarding the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic, the future remains unclear. However, on-going research and further events such as this by the Northwest London Vasculitis forum can help highlight the potential risks of SARS-CoV-2 vasculitis and provide greater insights relevant to all specialties.

Shawki El-Ghazali, Rheumatology registrar trainee, Northwest London Deanery

Justin C Mason, Professor of Vascular Rheumatology, Imperial College London.