

Is there an association between autoantibodies and a positive lip biopsy in Sjögren's syndrome?

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Introduction. The presence of autoantibodies (Abs) and focal sialoadenitis on labial salivary gland biopsies (LSGB) are considered to be the most specific disease markers in Sjögren's Syndrome (SS). LSGB are time consuming and thus the presence of Abs has increasingly served as a criterion in clinical rheumatologic practice. The aims of our study were to investigate if there is an association between a histologic diagnosis of the oral component of SS and the presence of Abs; to investigate if the presence of Abs is predictive of a positive LSGB.

Patients and methods. Retrospective study of clinical records between April 1992 and February 1999. The patients included fulfilled the following inclusion criteria: 1) have a suspected clinical diagnosis of primary SS or SS associated with other connective tissue disease (CTD) 2) have been submitted to LSGB that provided an adequate specimen for histologic examination 3) have at least one determination of rheumatoid factors, ANA, antiSSA and antiSSB. The patients included were 173 (166 F; 7 M); the mean age was 53.3 years (range 17-80; SD 12.0). The suspected clinical diagnosis prior to the biopsies were primary SS in 151 patients and SS associated with other CTD in 22 patients. The LSGB were obtained by punch or incisional techniques until December 1995 and after that by Daniels' technique (1). The histologic criteria for diagnosing SS were the presence of a focus score >1 per 4 mm² area of gland. The pathologist did not know the serological profile of each patient. We used the chi-square statistic for analysis of data.

Results

	All biopsies	Normal	Infiltrate not SS	SS	Fibrosis
Abs present	93	44	26	22	1
Abs absent	80	53	18	3	6

Patients with histologic criteria for SS had a higher prevalence of Abs when compared with patients with normal biopsies ($p=0,0001$) and with all other patients ($p=0,0002$). The positive predictive value of antiSSA/antiSSB Abs for a positive biopsy was $P=0.58$.

Discussion and conclusions. Patients with a histologic diagnosis of SS have a higher prevalence of Abs when compared with patients with normal biopsies, fibrosis and infiltrate not diagnostic of SS. These results agree with a previous observation in a smaller sample (2). However, the presence of antiSSA and antiSSB was not a very good predictive for a positive biopsy as it was in other studies (2,3).

References

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