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PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS IN CHILDREN: A REVIEW OF 467 CASES IN A TWENTY-FIVE YEAR PERIOD

M. Garcia-Fernandez de Villalta, F. Baquero-Artigao, A. Gomez-Zamora, M.J. Garcia-Miguel, M.I. de Jose, C. Borque, F. Martinez, F. del Castillo
Department of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, Hospital la Paz Madrid, Madrid, Spain
martagfv@yahoo.es

Objectives.To describe the features of pulmonary tuberculosis (Tb) in children seen over a twenty-five year period (1978-2001) in a reference hospital in Madrid (Spain).

Methods.From 1978-2002, the medical records of children under 14 years of age with diagnosed pulmonary Tb were reviewed. Criteria for pulmonary Tb included skin test with ≥ 5 mm induration and abnormal chest roentgenograph or positive culture for M.tuberculosis from gastric aspirate, bronchial exudate, pleural fluid or sputum.

Results.A total of 467 cases of Tb were diagnosed during the study period. Of these, 366 (78%) had pulmonary involvement. The median age at diagnosis was 4.4 years. Only 4 cases (1%) were HIV positive. Seven percent were foreign-born (42% from North Africa and 25% from South America). The proportion of Tb among immigrant children rose from 4% in the first 20 years of the study to 20% in the last five years. Diagnosis resulted from the examination of an ill child in 46% of cases, a case contact investigation of an adult suspected of having Tb in 39%, and routine tuberculin skin testing in 12%. The radiological pattern were as follow: hilar adenopathies (39%), pulmonary infiltrates (20%), mixed (32%), pleural 86%), cavitary (2%) and miliary (1%). In the last five years, we found two isoniazid-resistant and three multidrug-resistant isolates.

Conclusions. Pulmonary Tb is the most severe form of infection and remains a leading cause of morbidity in our country. In recent years an increase in tuberculosis among immigrant children and a pread of drug-resistant isolates were found.

