



Bacterial Profile Associated with Appendicitis

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Available online at: www.isca.in

Received 25th February 2013, revised 1st March 2013, accepted 15th March 2013

Abstract

The study included the detection of bacterial types in 110 excised appendix being taken from 110 patients having acute appendicitis who were referred to Al-Kufa Teaching Hospital, department of urology whose ages ranged from 4 to 60 years old. The patients were 69 (62.7%) males and 41(37.3%) females. The clinical features of patients being observed by surgeons were recorded. Those were right iliac fosse pain, generalized abdominal pain, fever, loss of appetite and nausea. White blood cells count, C-reactive protein and general urine analysis were also studied, in addition to abdominal ultra-sonography and computer tomography (C.T.). The age group of both sexes being more susceptible for appendicitis ranged from 11 to 20 years old. The ratio of males to females' infections was 1.7:1. A total of 111 bacterial isolates were isolated from inflamed appendicitis of 110 patients with acute appendicitis. Positive bacterial cultures were detected in 90 (81.8%) patients while 20 (18.2%) patients showed no growth. The aerobic bacteria accounted for 87 (78.4%) isolates whereas anaerobic were only 24(21.6%) isolates. Gram-negative bacteria were presented in 107 (96.4%) while gram-positive bacteria were accounted for 4 (3.6%). *Escherichia coli* was the predominant pathogens, since it accounted for 36 (32.4%) of all isolates followed by *Bacteroides* spp. 21 (18.9%), *Klebsiella pneumoniae* 18 (16.2 %), *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* 11 (9.9%), *Citrobacter freundii* 7 (6.3%), *Salmonella typhi* 5 (4.5%), *Proteus mirabilis* 5 (4.5%), *Enterobacter aerogenes* 4 (3.6%), *Peptodreptococcus* 2 (1.8%), *Staphylococcus aureus* 1 (0.9%) and *Clostridium perfringens* 1 (0.9%). Mixed cultures were detected in 21 cases (Full presentation for this data is not shown in this paper), in which more than one organism were detected. Most of mixed bacterial isolates were aerobic with anaerobic bacteria 13 (61.9%) in which *Escherichia coli* was the common, since it accounted for 15 (71.4%).

Keywords: Bacterial profile, appendicitis, C-reactive protein, gram-negative bacteria.

Introduction

The appendix is a blind-ending structure that arises from cecum. It is usually referred to as a functionless organ but may play a role in immunity¹.

Acute appendicitis is one of the most frequent conditions that leads to emergency abdominal surgery². Appendicitis is due to a closed-loop obstruction of the appendix which is usually due to either lymphoid hyperplasia within the appendix or impacted fecal matter which is referred to as a fecalith³. Obstruction leads to bacterial overgrowth which leads to an increase in intra-luminal pressure which obstructs the blood flow and leads to congestion and ischemia in the appendix allowing the bacterial translocation and infection resulting in the cause inflammation of appendix⁴.

As the infection progresses the inflammation advances to gangrenous. This leads to the appendicitis, consequently inflammatory fluid and bacterial contents spill and release in to abdominal cavity⁵. A variety of bacterial species have been reported to play a major role in appendicitis. Both, aerobic and anaerobic, gram-negative and gram-positive bacteria have been reported to be implicated in appendicitis such as *Bacteroides fragilis*⁶, Beta-hemolytic streptococci⁷, *Yersinia enterocolitica*⁸, *Escherichia coli*⁹, *Klebsiella* spp.¹⁰, *Citrobacter freundii*¹¹.

Most studies focused on the diagnosis of appendicitis. Other studies dealt with parasitic infection but very rare studies have been done regarding the bacterial infection of appendicitis. Therefore this study was suggested and designed to fulfill the following goals: i. Detection the bacterial profile associated with appendicitis. ii. Determination the common bacterial causes of appendicitis. iii. Determination the risk factor associates with appendicitis.

Material and Methods

The subjects: A total of 110 patients (69 males and 41 females) who were referred to AL-Kufa Teaching Hospital in Najaf and diagnosed by surgeons as acute appendicitis. Their ages ranged from 4 to 60 years. All patients were under the follow up laboratory investigation. General urine examination (GUE), White blood cells count (WBCs) and C-reactive protein were tested for them. Ultra-sonography and computerized tomography (C.T.) scanning being suggested by physicians were also considered in this study.

Materials: The necessary instruments, chemicals and biological substances were properly used in this study. The traditional culture media were used for routine diagnosis bacterial isolates. Peptone supplemented with 5% glucose was used as recommended by Abid AL-Sada, 1999¹² to transfer the

specimens to the laboratory for bacteriological analysis and inflame heated spatula (cauterization) method was used for sterilization the outer surfaces of excised appendix¹². The following diagnostic systems were used to confirm the diagnosis of bacterial isolates: (all of these systems were supplied by Analytab Products Co.) i. API 20E system for identification of gram-negative bacilli. ii. API 20S system for identification of streptococci. iii. API *Staph.* for identification of staphylococci. iv. API 20A system for identification of anaerobes.

Statistical analysis: The data were statically analyzed using Chi-square (X²) test and Z-test at 1% level¹³.

Results and Discussion

The clinical features related to appendicitis are shown in table-1. Those symptoms were recorded under the advice of surgeons. Most of the patients (84) included in this study were complaining from abdominal pain, either in right lower quadrant 70 patients (63.6%) or generalized pain 14 patients (12.7%), while most patients were febrile but low- grade fever characterized by flushness of the cheeks has been seen in 35 patients (31.8%). Nausea has been observed in 31 patients (28.1%) and 16 patients (14.5%) respectively. Diarrhea and vomiting were seen in 11(10.0%) and 6 patients (5.5%) respectively. The results were in accordance with the results obtained by Kosloske¹⁴, who stated that the right iliac fosse is the common features of appendicitis. Katzung¹⁵, stated that, the classic description of appendicitis is vague peri-umbilical pain followed by nausea, vomiting and anorexia¹⁵. Likewise, significant diarrhea is atypical in appendicitis. Patients with appendicitis relate symptoms of frequent, small-volume, soft stools and usually not true diarrhea. According to Katzung¹⁵, vomiting and fever are more frequent in patients with appendicitis than in patients with other causes of abdominal pain.

Table-1
Distribution of patients according to clinical features (n=110)

Clinical features	N(%)
Right iliac fosse pain	70(63.6)
fever	35(31.8)
Nausea	31(28.1)
Constipation	16(14.5)
Generalized pain	14(12.7)
Diarrhea	11(10.0)
Vomiting	6(5.5)
Anorexia	6(5.5)

According to the age, appendicitis occurs in all age groups, but the results revealed that, significant differences upon age factor (Cal. X² = 18.8, tab. X =7.81, P< 0.05) since the peak of incidences observed in the age group of 11 to 20 years old as shown in table 2, that the frequency of infection accounted for 57 (51.8%) patients , 39(35.4%) of them were males and 18(16.3%) females (the male-to-females ratio is approximately

2.1:1 among this group only). The results indicated that the appendicitis incidences decreased with the advancement of age, since the lowest rate 2(1.8%) was seen within the age group of 51 to 60 years old. Such results can ascribed to the nature of physiological and anatomical reasons of appendix tissues¹⁶, since lymphoid tissue is the most susceptible for infection gradually increases up to 20 years of age and then begins to decrease with advancement of the age up to 60 years old when it is totally disappear. In contrast appendicitis has been reported to be very rare in neonates¹⁵.

Back to table 2, the results indicated that males 69(62.7%) are significantly (Cal. Z= 2.126, tab. Z= 0.984, P< 0.09) more susceptible than females 41(37.3%) with a total ratio of 1.7:1. Similar results have been reported by Katzung¹⁵, Addiss¹⁷, Al-Fahad¹⁸ who stated that the male-to-female ratio is approximately 2:1. That because the diagnosis of acute appendicitis in males is more reliable compared with females, that misdiagnosis in females may result due to other diseases such as gynecologic diseases.

Table-2
Distribution of patients according to age and sex (n=110)

Age/year	No. patients (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)
4-10	3(2.7)	1(0.9)	2(1.8)
11-20	57(51.8)	39(35.4)	18(16.3)
21-30	33(30)	20(18.1)	13(11.8)
31-40	9(8.1)	5(4.5)	4(3.6)
41-50	6(5.4)	3(2.7)	3(2.3)
51-60	2(1.8)	1(0.9)	1(0.9)
Total	110	69(62.7)	41(37.3)

Table-3
Culturing of swabs from inflamed appendix

Type of bacterial isolate	N (%)
Gram-positive bacteria	107(96.4)
<i>Escherchia coli</i>	36(32.4)
<i>Bacteriodes spp.</i>	21(18.9)
<i>Klebsiella pneumoniae</i>	18(16.2)
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	11(9.9)
<i>Citrobacter frudii</i>	7(6.3)
<i>Salmonella typhi</i>	5(4.5)
<i>Proteus mirabilis</i>	5(4.5)
<i>Enterobacter aerogenes</i>	4(3.6)
Gram-positive bacteria	4(3.6)
<i>Peptostreptococcus sp.</i>	2(1.8)
<i>Clostridium perfriges</i>	1(0.9)
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	1(0.9)
Mixed growth	21(18.9)*
Total	131

Table 3 shows that 90 specimens (81.8%) out of 110 specimens (appendix swabs) yielded positive results for bacterial culture, while 20 specimens (18.2%) showed no growth. Among the positive growth, 65(59.1%) were males origin while 25(22.7%) were from females.

Table-4
Frequency of bacterial isolates detected in appendicitis

Cultural- results	n (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)
Positive	90(81.8)	65(59.1)	25(22.7)
Negative	20(18.2)	4(3.6)	16(14.6)
Total	110	69(62.7)	41(37.3)

A total of eleven bacterial genera were detected through this study, three genera belong to gram-positive bacteria and eight genera belong to gram-negative as shown in table 4. Gram-negative isolates were the common cause of appendicitis since they accounted for 107(96.4%) versus only 4 isolates (3.6%) gram-positive in addition to 21 cases (18.9%) which revealed mixed growth (more than single organism).

The most frequent pathogen was *E. coli* which accounted for 36 isolates (32.4%) followed by *Bacteroides* spp.; 21(18.9%), *Klebsiella pneumoniae*; 18(16.2%) and so on for the other bacteria presented in table 4 above. The results were in accordance with other results being reported by Elhage R. M. et al¹⁹ and Baste M. et al²⁰. The results were accepted and suspected, since *E. coli* is the common organism in intestine, fast proliferates and quickly adheres to the tissue surfaces²¹. The adhesion of microorganism to the epithelial cells is the first step of infection followed by the invasion step. *E. coli* has other virulence factors represented by heat-labile toxin, enterotoxin, hemolysin and cytotoxin necrotizing factor type 1 – CNF1²².

Bacteroides has been also reported to possess several factors capable to develop intra-abdominal infections by three ways; stimulation of abscess formation, reduction of phagocyte by polymorph-nuclear leukocytes (PMNL), because of the capsule of *Bacteroides* and the ability to produce Beta-lactamase which inactivates the antibiotics²³. Other gram-negative bacteria represented by *K. pneumoniae*, *C. freundii*, *S. typhi*, *P. mirabilis* and *E. aerogenes* were also detected to implicate in appendicitis although in low frequencies compared with other members of gram-negative bacteria (table- 4). However, the implication of these bacteria in appendicitis is suspected, since they belong to enteric group (*Enterobacteriaceae*) and frequently present in intestine and all have virulence factors enabling them to adhesion, invasion and causing infections²⁴. The explanation for detection of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in appendicitis can be attributed to the ability of this organism to adhere and strongly colonizes the epithelial tissue probably by pili and the alginate (a slime layer) surrounding the cells of this bacterium²⁵. Moreover, *P. aeruginosa* possesses active in producing enzymes and toxins which enable the bacteria to cause diseases.

In this study, some of gram-positive bacteria represented by *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Peptostreptococcus* sp., and *Clostridium perfringens* were also isolated from appendicitis cases, even in low frequencies in relative with that of gram-negative (table-4).

Members of gram-positive appendicitis are rarely reported at the present time. This may be due to adhesive and colonizer factors being less among gram-positive bacteria compared with that of gram-negative. Moreover, qualitatively, gram-positive infections are most serious and the detection of *Clostridium welchii* during this study can be the announcement that the obligate anaerobic necrotizer gas gangrene causative agent, *Cl. welchii* can implicate in appendicitis.

Conclusion

Both gram-negative and gram-positive, aerobic and anaerobic bacteria can cause appendicitis. Gram-negative bacteria are most common in appendicitis compared with gram-positive type. Occurrence of appendicitis increases during the warm season. Women are some time misdiagnosed as appendicitis leading to unnecessary appendectomy.

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