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Title: Use of linezolid in complex MDR-TB cases

Dr. Yi-Wen 17513 Huang hiwen1533@yahoo.com.tw MD ¹, Ms. Hsin-Chieh 17552 Tsai tsai@mail.chhw.doh.gov.tw ¹, Dr. Ching-Nien 17553 Chang tsai@mail.chhw.doh.gov.tw ² and Dr. Wen-Ta 17554 Yang taic3057@gmail.com ³. ¹ Pulmonary and Critical Care Unit, Changhua Hospital, Puxin Town, Changhua County, Taiwan, 513 ; ² Surgery Department, Changhua Hospital, Puxin Town, Changhua County, Taiwan, 513 and ³ Tuberculosis Department, Taichung Hospital, Taichung, Taiwan .

Body: Introduction The control of tuberculosis is facing challenges with the development of drug resistance as more drugs are used. Complex MDR-TB has recently emerged as a global public health issue. In Taiwan, there are around 600-800 MDR-TB cases with 1.0% new TB cases, 6.2% retreatment cases and 10.0% XDR-TB. Treating MDR-TB has become much more difficult, a new treatment regimen is mandatory. Aims Our aim is to investigate the use of linezolid in treating complex MDR-TB. Methods For subjects with persistent positive sputa after a prolonged use of 2nd line drugs or resistance to more than 7 medications, linezolid was utilized. Clinical, epidemiological and microbiological characteristics of all subjects were collected. Drug tolerance, side effects and treatment outcomes of linezolid were also recorded. Results Nine MDR-TB patients (6 men and 3 women with a median age of 47 years) received linezolid. The M. tuberculosis strains were resistant to a median of 7 drugs. Culture conversion occurred in 5 cases at a median of 21 days. Six out of 9 (69%) cases had side effects including mild to moderate-severe anemia, thrombocytopenia, optic neuropathy, and peripheral neuropathy. Most side effects resolved after linezolid was reduced or ceased. Linezolid was tolerated well by most patients. However, one patient stopped due to severe side effects and one died from non-TB caused co-morbidity. Conclusions Treatment for complex MDR-TB is complicated and time-consuming, linezolid has appeared to be a potential drug with a high sputum conversion rate and good tolerance. However, further study is required to determine the effect of linezolid in MDR-TB since the present study is limited by its small size.