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Etiological profile of venous thrombosis of the upper limb

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Introduction

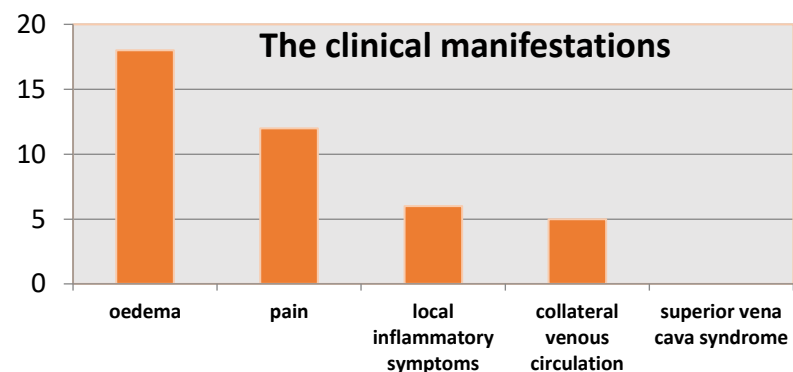
Venous thrombosis of the upper limb (VTUL) is a particular form of venous thromboembolism. Its seriousness is linked to its possible progression to pulmonary embolism or post-thrombotic syndrome. The aim of our study was to describe the clinical, aetiological and evolutionary aspects of VTUL.

Methods

a retrospective descriptive study of the records of patients hospitalised between 2009 and 2023, in an internal medicine department, VTUL was detected by Doppler.

Results

- We included 18 patients with a sex ratio of 1.4:1 and a mean age of 46.5 years [18-80].
- The mean delay in diagnosis was 1 month [1 week-3 months].
- Venous Doppler showed deep venous thrombosis in 12 patients and superficial venous thrombosis in 6 patients.



- The locations of thrombosis :
 - the subclavian vein (n=5),
 - the internal jugular vein (n=2),
 - the axillary vein (n=1),
 - the humeral vein (n=3)
 - the brachiocephalic venous trunk (n=5).
- Superficial thrombosis involved the cephalic and basilic veins.
- Thromboembolic risk factors were noted in 9 patients.
- **Aetiological investigation** revealed venitis (n=5), neoplasia (n=3) including lymphoma (n=2) and prostate adenocarcinoma (n=1), hyperhomocysteinemia (n=3), inflammatory disease (n=2) and VTUL remained idiopathic in 5 patients.

- Complications included pulmonary embolism (n=1) and digestive haemorrhage (n=1).
- Curative treatment was based on heparin therapy (n=15) followed by VKA in 13 patients. AODs were prescribed in only one case.

Conclusion

VTUL is rare hence the delay in diagnosis. The key examination is venous Doppler. Our work showed that VTUL should be suspected in the presence of edema and pain in the upper limb. In some cases, the etiology remained undetermined, and more time was needed to assess the condition for fear of possible cancer.