Sulfasalazine and pentoxifylline in psoriasis: a possible safe alternative

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Conventional therapy of extensive psoriasis is effective but has complications. Biologics are safer but expensive.

OBJECTIVE:

To assess the efficacy of sulfasalazine and pentoxifylline, which have TNF antagonizing and anti-proliferative action in the treatment of psoriasis.

METHODS:

In this randomized controlled trial, 32 patients with extensive psoriasis were divided into four groups: group A received sulfasalazine; group B received pentoxifylline; group C received both drugs; and group D received methotrexate. The Psoriasis Area and Severity Index (PASI) score was done at weeks 0, 2, 4, 6 and 8.

RESULTS:

A significant reduction in PASI score occurred in groups C and D ($p = 0.043$ and 0.018, respectively). A significantly higher percentage of PASI score reduction occurred in group D compared with groups A, B and C ($p = 0.006$, 0.003 and 0.030, respectively). An excellent response occurred in one patient (14.3%) in group D. A very good response occurred in two patients (22.2%) in group C, and in five patients (71.4%) in group D. A moderate response occurred in three patients (37.5%) in group A, one patient (12.5%) in group B, and one patient (14.3%) in group D.

CONCLUSION:

Although incomparable to methotrexate, combined sulfasalazine and pentoxifylline produced a good response in cases of extensive psoriasis. Multicentre studies are needed to validate these results.

PublishedIn: J Dermatolog Treat. 2011 Feb;22(1):31-7