Isolation of Ureaplasma urealyticum from urological outpatients

KAWAMURA, Nobuo; NAKAJIMA, Noboru; SHIRAMIZU, Miki; HOSHINO, Hideaki; KINOSHITA, Hidechika

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ISOLATION OF UREAPLASMA UREALYTICUM FROM UROLOGICAL OUT PATIENTS

Nobuo KAWAMURA, Noboru NAKAJIMA, Miki SHIRAMIZU, Hideaki HOSHINO and Hidechika KINOSHITA

From the Department of Urology, School of Medicine, Tokai University (Director: Prof. N. Kawamura)

Ureaplasma urealyticum was isolated in 25.5% of the patients with urethritis and in 12.9% of the patients with prostatitis. The organism was isolated more frequently in non-gonococcal urethritis than in gonorrheal urethritis. It may thus be said that the isolation rate was higher among patients with overt signs or symptoms as compared with the common isolation rate in urine reportedly being about 10%.

Key words: Ureaplasma urealyticum, NGU, STD, Prostatitis

Ureaplasma urealyticum is frequently demonstrated in the urine of man and in the semen as well, but much remains unclear as to its pathogenicity1-4). We isolated U. urealyticum chiefly from urine of male patients, with comments on clinical manifestations of infection by this organism and on its pathogenicity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The subjects studied were male patients who had experienced sexual intercourse and who were outpatients at the Department of Urology, Tokai University Hospital, Isehara, Japan, during the recent four years. Most of these patients had urethritis and/or prostatitis, or male sterility. Also included were those who attended the clinic for examination for venereal disease though without symptoms.

Bacteriological examination was performed by the Taylor-Robinson test5). As the test is based on the principle of colour reaction for enzymatic urea decomposition, urine may show a false positive test if it contains bacteria capable of urea breakdown. In the present study, therefore, portions of urine samples were cultured and patients whose urine cultures showed a growth of urease-producing bacteria were excluded from the study.

The laboratory test of urine was performed on 518 patients, on a total of 970 occasions because of repeated tests, post-treatment retesting and collection of two or more different types of specimens from the same patient. No females were included in the present series.

RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes the statistical data concerning Taylor-Robinson tests of urine and other clinical specimens59). Tests of samples of urine voided after prostate massage were included among the 780 urine specimens examined of the 4 samples classified under "other", two were effusions from hydrocele testis, one was urethral discharge, and the other one, pus from chronic epididymitis7). Table 2 shows the U. urealyticum isolation rates according to clinical entity. Most of the cases classified under "others" were of male infertility.

DISCUSSION

These high rates of isolation of U. urealyticum from the male urethra eventually implies a great probability of its being sexually transmitted disease (STD) and a high likelihood that the organism causes ascending urinary tract infection7-10) with consequent deterioration of the characteristics of semen, thereby giving rise to male
Table 1. Isolation of *U. urealyticum* from the different specimen of patients with STD or related disease.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specimen</th>
<th>No. of specimens</th>
<th><em>U. urealyticum</em> positive No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urine</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semen</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Isolation of *U. urealyticum* from the urine of patient with STD and related disease.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>No. of patient</th>
<th><em>U. urealyticum</em> positive No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urethritis</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostatitis</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

sterility \(^{11,12}\). Thus the organism would have to be eradicated. Therapeutic responses of the patients treated will be reported elsewhere, tetracyclines and erythromycins have been described to be usually effective against *U. urealyticum* and, in fact, we observed satisfactory therapeutic responses in patients given these antibiotics \(^{13-17}\).

Concurrence of *U. urealyticum* with *Chlamydia trachomatis* or *Trichomonas vaginalis* has often been documented in the literature \(^{12,17-21}\). These organisms are all transmissible by sexual intercourse and, therefore, it is natural that they coexist in certain milieus. However, it appears very unlikely that they mutually influence each other. Changes in pH and promotion of the growth of other organisms by metabolites in culture may occur, but it seems improbable that such interrelations take place in vivo.

There was no clinical evidence of inflammation in virtually any *U. urealyticum* positive case \(^{11,22-24}\). This would suggest that the organism is not pathogenic at least for urethritis. The possibility that the organism harbours specifically in the prostate or is causative of prostatitis seems to be ruled out, since it was isolated from urine after prostatic massage as frequently as or less frequently than from spontaneously voided urine. In *T. vaginalis* infection, for example, trichomonads are detected in post-prostatic massage urine with a significantly higher frequency than in spontaneously voided urine and that the urine often presents findings indicative of inflammatory reactions \(^{23}\).

In women, discharges from the uterine cervix have usually been subjected to detection of *U. urealyticum* whereas urine specimens have not been used. The influence of the organism on the female urinary tract remains unknown.

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和文抄録

われわれの Ureaplasma urealyticum 検出率について

東海大学医学部泌尿器科学教室（主任：河村信夫教授）

河村 信夫 中島 登 白水 幹
星 野 英 章 木下 英 親

東海大学病院における Ureaplasma urealyticum の検出率を検討した。尿道炎から25.5％、前立腺炎から12.9％の検出率であった。非淋菌性尿道炎からの検出率が淋菌性尿道炎からのそれより高かった。通常、尿からの検出率は10％位といわれているので、症状のある患者からはこのようにやや高率に見出されるのであろう。

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