Abstract

The advent of Mycobacterium tuberculosis strain genotyping has allowed differentiation between disease relapse and exogenous re-infection. We report here a remarkable case of multiply recurrent tuberculosis in a patient living with HIV. Between 1995 and 2009, a young HIV-infected intravenous drug user, who was reluctant to comply with anti-retroviral treatment, underwent at least five tuberculosis episodes caused by three distinct M. tuberculosis strains sharply differentiated by drug susceptibility profile, genotype and infectious source. Eventually, the patient died during a relapse of tuberculosis due to a notorious multidrug-resistant outbreak-strain, which infected him during a prolonged hospitalization in the epicentre of such outbreak. Whether recurrent tuberculosis is due to a new infection or to reactivation of a previous one is a century-long controversial question. In our patient, both conditions alternated throughout his 15 years of living with HIV. Cases such as this might not be exceptional in certain underprivileged suburban areas of Argentina and should raise concern over three pending issues in tuberculosis control policies, namely secondary preventing therapy, institutional infection control and patient follow-up throughout the health network system.

Keywords

Tuberculosis, Recurrence, Relapse, Reinfection, AIDS, HIV