

A-04: Treatment of bancroftian filariasis with albendazole: evaluation of efficacy and adverse reactions

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The comparative efficacy, tolerability and laboratory safety of albendazole and diethylcarbamazine citrate (DEC) in treating patients with lymphatic filariasis caused by *Wuchereria bancrofti* was evaluated as an open pilot study. Twenty seven asymptomatic, microfilaraemic male patients were treated with 400 mg albendazole twice daily for 3 weeks or DEC, 6 mg/kg/day (given in 3 divided doses) for the same duration. Blood microfilariae (mf) levels were determined at regular intervals over a period of 15 months. Both drugs showed microfilaricidal effects, this being less pronounced with albendazole compared to DEC. However, 73% of albendazole treated patients showed indirect features of killing of adult worms. This manifested as a scrotal syndrome. This feature was not seen with DEC. In 2 patients albendazole had to be discontinued because of this adverse effect. When patients were followed up for over 15 months, some remained mf negative. Even in those patients who remained mf positive the counts were low.

Thus, both albendazole and DEC in the doses used in the present study appear to have effects on mf and adult worms and albendazole appears to be macrofilaricidal. No persistent anomalies in biochemical and haematological parameters were seen in either group of patients treated with these drugs. Other dosage schedules for the use of albendazole in the treatment of lymphatic filariasis merit investigation.