Combination of Steroid and Flavonoid for the Treatment of Regressive Autism

Barış Ekici

Department of Pediatric Neurology, Istanbul Pediatric Neurology Center, Istanbul, Turkey

Letter to the Editor

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder of early childhood with symptoms of impairments in social interaction and communication with accompanying repetitive behaviors or restricted interests. Treatment options available for the core symptoms are limited despite increasing prevalence. But in recent years, our knowledge was expanded about immunological dysfunctions in patients, particularly having marked regression after a period of normal development.

Previous studies reported that patients with regressive autism could benefit from immune-based therapies such as steroids, flavonoids, and intravenous immunoglobulin. Here, I want to share my clinical experience about a novel treatment protocol combined steroids with flavonoids.

Seventeen children (3 girls and 14 boys) diagnosed with ASD were enrolled in steroid treatment. Social development of children before autistic regression was evaluated from previous video recordings and parent reports. All had adequate eye contact and reciprocal social interaction before regression. Regression was defined as loss of acquired social skills and words used communicatively. The treatment protocol was designed as 1 mg/kg deflazacort for 3 months, followed by slow tapering for 6 months. One month before cessation of steroid therapy, 250 mg/day quercetin supplementation was initiated and planned for at least 16 months. Two patients dropped out treatment, one from gastrointestinal side effects and the other due to emerging masturbation behavior. Fifteen patients aged between 4 and 8 years and 8 months completed steroid treatment and still on quercetin treatment (10–25 months; mean, 18 months). All patients had electroencephalography (EEG) recording before treatment. Six patients had bilateral central spikes. None of them reported seizures. One patient had corpus callosum agenesis and one had mild periventricular leukomalacia at magnetic resonance imaging. One patient was diagnosed as cerebral palsy with seizures. One patient had corpus callosum agenesis and one had mild periventricular leukomalacia at magnetic resonance imaging. One patient was diagnosed as cerebral palsy with seizures. One patient had corpus callosum agenesis and one had mild periventricular leukomalacia at magnetic resonance imaging. One patient was diagnosed as cerebral palsy with seizures. One patient had corpus callosum agenesis and one had mild periventricular leukomalacia at magnetic resonance imaging. One patient was diagnosed as cerebral palsy with seizures. One patient had corpus callosum agenesis and one had mild periventricular leukomalacia at magnetic resonance imaging.

Microglial activity and increased plasma levels of tumor necrosis factor α and interleukin-6 in patients with autism had repeatedly proven. Two major flavonoids, quercetin and luteolin, inhibit the release of leukotrienes, histamine, interleukin-6, and tumor necrosis factor-α from culture of human microglia.
mast cells. At the study of Tsilioni et al., 40 patients diagnosed as autism was treated with a luteolin-containing dietary supplement for 26 weeks and showed improvement autism symptoms and reduction in serum levels of interleukin-6 and tumor necrosis factor α. Quercetin was added to our treatment protocol for prolongation of immunotherapy as a steroid sparing agent.

In conclusion, a subset of patients with autism could benefit from immune-based treatment. Marked regression in the patient’s history is a valuable tip for patient selection. Finally, protocols combining agents could save patients from side effects and may prevent deterioration after the therapy.

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Conflict of Interest
None declared.

References
5 Tsilioni I, Taliou A, Francis K, Theoharides TC. Children with autism spectrum disorders, who improved with a luteolin-containing dietary formulation, show reduced serum levels of TNF and IL-6. Transl Psychiatry 2015;5:e647