Empirical Treatment Based on Typical Reflux Symptoms May be Inappropriate in Young Military Soldiers

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Background and Aim: Empirical therapy have been recommended as acceptable management options for gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) for young patients without alarm features. We aim to study the incidence of peptic ulcer disease (PUD) among young military soldiers presenting with typical reflux symptoms.

Methods: Consecutive patients who were referred for upper endoscopy were evaluated with a structured questionnaire followed by endoscopy. Patients with ‘typical’ reflux symptoms were analyzed after excluding patients with ‘alarm’ features (weight loss, dysphagia or bleeding), history of peptic ulcer or gastric surgery, or recent nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs intake.

Results: One hundred ninety two patients were analyzed. All patients were male, with mean age of 22.2±1.7. Active stage ulcer was noticed in 9 patients (5%), and ulcer scar was seen in 8 patients (4%). Overall, peptic ulcer disease (PUD) were noticed in 17 patients (9%), and 12 of 17 patients (71%) were infected with Helicobacter pylori. Erosive esophagitis was noticed in 32 patients (17%). There was no patient with malignancy. Among patients with PUD, 12 of 17 patients (71%) were active smoker, which was significantly higher than patients without PUD (72 of 175, 41%, p=0.019).

Conclusion: Among young military soldiers, a some proportion of patients with typical GERD symptoms had concomitant PUD. Empirical treatment based on "typical" reflux symptoms may be inappropriate in young military soldiers.

Key Words: Peptic ulcer disease, Gastroesophageal reflux disease, Typical symptoms, Endoscopy