

Respiratory infections

Severe course of Whooping Cough in adults - a series of cases

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Bordetella Pertussis is a gram-negative aerobic coccobacillus causing contagious respiratory tract disease called the Whooping Cough. Its virulence factors consist of pertussis toxin (PT), filamentous haemagglutinin, fimbriae, Lipooligosaccharide (LOS) Adenylate Cyclase Toxin (ACT). The disease is causing a worldwide threat to Public Health despite high vaccination coverage. In adolescents and adults the course of the disease is frequently atypical and may be life-threatening. Retrospective analysis of 5 patients admitted to Internal Medicine Ward presented atypical and severe symptoms. Recognition was based on serological tests: serum concentration of specific antibodies against PT, direct fluorescent antibody staining of nasopharyngeal secretions and/or sputum culture. Accurate physical examination, radiological examination was substantial in differential diagnosis. We observed a wide spectrum of symptoms. From benign (sinus pain - 80%, headaches - 20%), *throughout* moderate (hemoptysis - 40%; chest pain 60%) to severe symptoms (cardiac *arrhythmia* - 40%; syncopes - 60 %). Mean duration time from onset of first symptoms to diagnosis was 35 days. The course of the whooping cough in adults is frequently atypical, causing difficulty in diagnosis. It can cause life-threatening complications and exacerbation of concomitant chronic diseases. Most vaccination programmes cover only first few months of life, however booster doses should be considered in adults, especially those immunocompromised, with pneumological complications and healthcare workers, that are susceptible not only to acquire, but also to spread the disease.