

SCRUB TYPHUS IN CHILDREN IN A TEACHING HOSPITAL IN EASTERN TAIWAN, 2000-2005

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Abstract. Scrub typhus is an endemic disease in eastern Taiwan. We conducted a study of scrub typhus cases among hospitalized pediatric patients. Twenty-eight pediatric cases were confirmed to be scrub typhus (either by immunofluorescence assay or polymerase chain reaction) from 2000 to 2005. The medical records of these patients were reviewed for demographics and clinical manifestations. The majority of the children (60.7%) diagnosed with scrub typhus were male. Approximately half the patients were <5 years old and the mean age (SD) was 6.1 (3.66) years. Patients were more likely to live in rural rather than urban areas. The greatest number of cases was seen in the spring and summer. The primary clinical symptoms included fever (100%), cough (50%), eschar (50%), rash (35.7%), poor appetite (42.9%), lymphadenopathy (42.9%), headache (39.3%), and hepatomegaly (35.7%). A C-reactive protein (CRP) was elevated in 100%, an aspartate aminotransferase (AST) was elevated in 100%, an alanine aminotransferase (ALT) level was elevated in 91.3%, hypoalbuminemia was found in 88.9% and proteinuria in 50%. The mean (SD) duration of antibiotics was 11.0 (2.68) days and the mean (SD) duration for fever resolution after treatment was 2.8 (2.51) days. Meningoencephalitis was noted in 6 patients. Our case series had no mortalities. These results suggest that a diagnosis of scrub typhus should be suspected in children with fever and laboratory evidence of liver dysfunction who live in rural eastern Taiwan.

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