

# Characteristics and management patterns of patients admitted with fever and thrombocytopenia to an acute general medical unit in Sri Lanka - a retrospective analysis

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## Introduction

Dengue is one of the major health problems in Sri Lanka with the worst outbreak occurred in 2009/2010.

## Objective

To study the characteristics of patients with fever and thrombocytopenia as the reason for admission to a medical unit of a teaching hospital in Sri Lanka.

## Methods

Medical records of all patients admitted to the University Medical unit, NHSL with fever and thrombocytopenia (platelet count  $\leq 150 \times 10^9/L$ ) between the 01<sup>st</sup> of May and the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2009 were analyzed. Patients with a clear bacterial focus of infection were excluded.

## Results

94 patients were admitted fulfilling the above criteria. Patients were categorized into three groups based on platelet count of  $< 50 \times 10^9/L$  (group 1, n=25),  $51-100 \times 10^9/L$  (group 2, n=31),  $101-150 \times 10^9/L$  (group 3, n=38). The mean age of patients was 31.39 years whilst the mean duration of inpatient care for each group was approximately 4-5 days. The most frequent symptoms were myalgia (67%), arthralgia (60.6%) and headache (58.5%). Seventeen patients had bleeding manifestations mainly gastrointestinal bleeding (12.9%). Postural hypotension and hepatomegaly were detected in 16% and 13.8% respectively. Only 6 patients had dengue antibody levels checked. Intravenous fluids used in 91.5%. Bleeding manifestations (p=0.008) and the need for platelet transfusion (p=0.011) was more likely in patients admitted with a platelet count below  $50 \times 10^9/L$ . No significant difference was seen in the 3 groups with regards to age, the need for intravenous fluids, or duration of hospital stay.

## Conclusions

Fever with thrombocytopenia is initially managed as dengue, based on clinical diagnosis. Bleeding manifestations and platelet transfusion correlated positively with lower admission platelet counts.