

A case of new-onset SLE during pregnancy an initial manifestation with all diagnostic criteria: The challenges of diagnosis and managing a complex disease in a low resource setting

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Abstract

Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is a complex chronic multiorgan autoimmune disease. When newly diagnosed during pregnancy or puerperium, it is known as new-onset SLE during pregnancy. Delayed or missed diagnosis of new-onset SLE during pregnancy may occur due to similar clinical manifestation of SLE with normal physiological changes of pregnancy and lupus nephritis with preeclampsia. New-onset SLE during pregnancy has major organ involvement with poor maternal and foetal outcomes. Management options are limited due to teratogenic side effects of drugs in pregnancy. This is further compounded in a low resource setting with lack of health seeking behaviours and inadequate access to timely care. Multidisciplinary management with close medical, obstetric, neonatal monitoring, patient education and improved access to care is essential for better outcomes. Our aim is to report a 19 year old primigravida with new onset SLE in pregnancy and multiorgan involvement fulfilling all criteria for diagnosis of SLE at the first presentation.

Key words: systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), anti dsDNA antibody, lupus nephritis, neonatal lupus, low resource setting

Introduction

SLE is an idiopathic chronic-inflammatory-multiorgan-autoimmune-connective-tissue-disease affecting multiple-organs in the body¹. It is a multifactorial disease with evidence of genetic susceptibility, environmental effects, and disturbances in both innate and adaptive immunity². Increased SLE disease activity is expected during pregnancy because of increased

levels of oestrogen, prolactin and T-helper cell 2 cytokines^{1,3}. Pregnancy is associated with an increased risk of SLE flares maybe misdiagnosed due to overlapping features. There are numerous maternal-and-foetal-complications⁴. SLE in pregnancy is a complex-disease which should be managed by a team with proper expertise for both investigation and management⁵.

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