Evidence-based recommendations for the management of ankylosing spondylitis: results of the Hellenic working group of the 3E Initiative in rheumatology

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Abstract

Objective

The 3E (Evidence, Experts and Exchange) Initiative is a multi-national effort that involves a large number of experts and practicing rheumatologists addressing specific questions relevant to everyday clinical practice, concerning the management of Ankylosing Spondylitis. Within this multinational group, the Hellenic working group, addressed specific issues complementary to the international ones, and formulated evidence-based recommendations, in order to improve everyday clinical practice for patients with Ankylosing Spondylitis.

Methods

A scientific committee of rheumatologists specializing in AS formulated a set of 7 questions in three domains: diagnosis, monitoring and treatment. Literature search in MedLine for papers published up to August 2006 was conducted. The evidence to support each proposition was evaluated and scored. To avoid any conflict of interest with the sponsor issues related to the use of biologics were not discussed. After extensive discussion among 50 rheumatologists and one Delphi round of votes, the final recommendations were formulated.

Results

A literature search resulted in a total of 320 relevant papers of which 29 were evaluated. A total of seven recommendations were formulated: two concerning diagnosis (role of HLA-B27 and MRI) and prognosis, one concerning monitoring for extra-articular manifestations and four concerning treatment (analgesics, disease modifying agents and physical therapy) were made. The level of evidence and the strength of recommendation were reported. The compiled agreement among experts ranged from 90% up to 100%.

Conclusion

Recommendations for the management of AS were developed using an evidence-based approach followed by physicians’ consensus with high level of agreement. These are complementary to existing ones, and address specific domains of everyday clinical practice.

Key words

Ankylosing spondylitis, recommendations, monitoring, diagnosis, treatment.