

Guideline for Diagnosing Chronic Myocarditis

Japanese Circulation Society (JCS) Task Force Committee
on Chronic Myocarditis[#]

CHRONIC myocarditis lacks a concise definition¹⁻¹² the term "chronic myocarditis" has been used to describe various conditions of myocarditis¹³⁻¹⁵. The Dallas criteria for myocarditis^{16,17} do not address this issue. Therefore, in 1991, the Japanese Circulation Society organized a Task Force Committee in order to establish guidelines. The Committee members were all experienced clinical cardiologists and/or cardiac pathologists who were specialists in this field.

This Committee met regularly: in Kurume City (November 1991), Tokyo (November 1992), Ube City (November 1993) and Tokyo (February 1994). Procedures adopted by the Committee included a nationwide survey to isolate suspected cases of chronic myocarditis, and discussions concerning these cases.

A total of 58 cases of chronic myocarditis were suspected, 15 of these were eventually confirmed to be chronic myocarditis. Through discussion and consultation, one case was identified as persistent inflammation type following an acute onset, the other

14 cases were of insidious onset type. Definitions of the two types follow, along with our findings and recommendations.

It is the Committee's hope that these definitions will be applied in both clinical and histopathological recognition of this disease.

DEFINITION

Chronic myocarditis consists two types. The first is characterized by prolonged or persistent inflammatory infiltration following an acute onset of myocarditis^{*}; the other is characterized by an insidious onset of myocarditis with chronic processes. The latter may develop heart failure which may mimic dilated cardiomyopathy and/or arrhythmias.

The myocarditis does not include disorders attributed to the following: toxicities (cocaine, amphetamines, etc), chemicals (lithium, arsenic, doxorubicin, etc), physical agents (radiation, heat, etc), allergy, immune disorders such as collagen disease, and sarcoidosis.

Key words:

Chronic myocarditis
Heart failure
Arrhythmias
Active myocarditis
Endomyocardial biopsy
Myocardial scintigram
Autopsy

REFERENCING MATTERS FOR DIAGNOSIS

- 1) Observable symptoms and signs suggesting the presence of myocarditis may in-

(Received January 27, 1995; accepted March 9, 1995)

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clude heart failure and/or arrhythmias.

2) Endomyocardial biopsy:

There is accumulation or infiltration** of large and/or small round cells in the myocardium associated with myocytolysis or necrosis of adjacent myocytes. Diffuse interstitial fibrosis, irregular replacement of myocardial fibrosis, and fatty infiltration are also observed. The myocytes show hypertrophy, variation in size, and an irregular arrangement.

3) Myocardial scintigraphy:

Positive findings obtained through ⁶⁷Ga-citrate scintigrams, ^{99m}Tc-pyrophosphate scintigrams or ¹¹¹In-antimyosin antibody scintigrams are valuable indicators of the myocarditis.

4) Autopsy:

In some cases, endomyocardial biopsy may not show the myocarditis. However, the diagnosis of chronic myocarditis may still be made at autopsy.

*Prolongation or persistence of inflammatory infiltration means that active myocarditis remains present for more than 3 months following the onset of acute myocarditis.

**Cellular infiltration is defined as the existence of more than 5 mononuclear cells per field (magnification $\times 400$), and cellular accumulation is more than 20 mononuclear cells per field (magnification $\times 400$) by optical microscopic examination.

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