Humans infected with bird flu: Is there evidence of cardiac disorder?

Bird flu, or avian flu, is caused by the H5N1 virus and is a relatively new and emerging infectious disease that was associated with high mortality in humans in Vietnam and Thailand in 2004. Most of those infected individuals developed progressive pneumonia with acute respiratory distress syndrome and consequently died. The author performed the present ministudy to document the cardiac manifestation among the reported Thai and Vietnamese patients. A literature review regarding human bird flu in Thailand and Vietnam was performed via a database search of published works cited in the Index Medicus and Science Citation Index, as well as a search of the published works in all 256 local Thai journals not included in the international citation indexes. The reports that contained incomplete data were excluded from further analysis.

There were seven reports (1-7) covering 22 Thai and Vietnamese patients with a firm diagnosis of bird flu. Of interest, there was neither cardiac manifestation nor abnormal laboratory investigations indicating cardiac involvement in any of these patients. Indeed, there is a previous report (8) stating that the TP intervals and PR segments of the electrocardiograms of bird flu-infected chickens were significantly longer than those of noninfected chickens. Mitchell and Brugh (8) proposed that the pronounced conduction delays indicated in the electrocardiogram of infected chickens may

have diagnostic importance. However, there is no report of this finding in human infection. The present ministudy implies that cardiac manifestation may not be an important manifestation of bird flu-infected humans.

Yours sincerely,

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