Blood Dyscrasias and Myocarditis in Infectious Mononucleosis

R. K. DAS, R. SEIDELIN

Infectious mononucleosis is a common disease and serious complications rarely occur. Haemolytic anaemia with thrombocytopenia has been reported previously though rarely with accompanying myocarditis.

Case History
A 47-year-old male nurse was admitted to hospital in August 1970. He had previously enjoyed good health with the exception of a longstanding productive cough and in 1962 slight ocular and joint pains. Cold haemogloburia was reported by Minot (1929), and since then numerous reports have appeared in the literature showing in most cases recovery within six weeks. Schumacher (1961) reported a case in which thrombocytopenia persisted for about a year. Evans and Duane (1949) emphasized the relation between thrombocytopenia and haemolytic anaemia of an autoimmune type and suggested that thrombocytopenia and leucopenia might depend on the formation of autoantibodies of rather wide specificity capable of destroying platelets and leukocytes as well as erythrocytes. The presence of platelet antibodies in this patient is indicated by the positive indirect platelet antiglobulin consumption test. The serological findings were discussed in detail by Dacie (1962), and the direct antiglobulin test on the patient's red cells was positive in nine of his cases.

The cause of the haemolysis has been attributed to several mechanisms. A direct action of the virus particles of infectious mononucleosis on erythrocytes resulting in agglutination and haemolysis has been postulated and hypersplenism secondary to the splenomegaly in this disease has been considered. In most cases autoimmune antibodies have been shown, and the presence of abnormal globulins adds further weight to the suggestion of an autoimmune process as the cause of the haemolysis. Most cases of haemolytic anaemia complicating infectious mononucleosis recover spontaneously, but patients treated with corticosteroids usually recover more rapidly and, as in the present patient, severe anaemia and serious illness may make such therapy urgently required.

References