Letter by Kothari Regarding Article, “Tropical Endomyocardial Fibrosis: Natural History, Challenges, and Perspectives”

To the Editor:

I was interested to read the excellent review on the neglected tropical disease endomyocardial fibrosis (EMF), still considered a mysterious illness. These authors and others remark on the eosinophilia regularly seen in the acute phase of illness but also simultaneously decry the definitive role of eosinophils in the pathogenesis of EMF. The authors in this contemporary review nicely compile the arguments for and against the role of several aetiologies that might be responsible for the disease, often by causing eosinophilia. An appraisal of the references clearly shows that most of the studies arguing against eosinophilia hypothesis were done in the chronic phase of the disease. It is known that even in the typical eosinophilia-induced EMF in temperate zones, eosinophils are not present in the chronic stage of the cardiomyopathy.

The skepticism surrounding the role of eosinophils in the etiology of EMF has been stretched beyond reasonable limits because of our inability to understand why only a few persons develop EMF despite ubiquitous illnesses causing eosinophilia. But that should be another question rather than continue to doubt the central role played by eosinophils in the initiating EMF. Evolution of acute eosinophilic myocarditis to typical EMF has also been rarely documented, but these reports have not been adequately recognized as proof of the concept. We also reported a child with eosinophilic myocarditis who presented a decade later with typical EMF. Remarkable decrease in the incidence of EMF in Kerala with improved socioeconomic state and a decrease in parasitic and other infectious illnesses also favor the eosinophilia hypothesis. Research should be directed toward identifying the other unknown aspects of pathogenesis. Other factors remain important for cigarette smoking causing lung cancer or high low-density lipoproteins causing atherosclerosis, but we do not doubt the etiology in these instances. The cause of this neglected disease would be better served if we think straight and focus on the question of how eosinophilic endomyocardial damage is “conditioned” in patients and how to prevent or treat it.

DISCLOSURES

None.

AFFILIATIONS

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REFERENCES


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