Letter to Editor

Conjunctivitis and other Eye Manifestations in Swine Flu

Viroj Wiwanitkit, MD

Abstract

Swine flu is a new emerging infectious disease originating in Mexico. This novel influenza is the present pandemic disease of the world. In this brief paper, the author discusses on conjunctivitis and other eye manifestations in swine flu.

Keywords: Swine Flu, Conjunctivitis

Introduction

The present novel pandemic influenza virus infection around the world is the result of a newly genetic reassorted influenza virus.\(^1\) The pathogenic virus is the result from combination of genetic materials from bird, human beings and pig influenza viruses.\(^1,2\) The new disease, swine flu, presently attacks almost all countries around the world. The human to human transmission is confirmed. Infected cases can manifest symptoms similar to classical influenza including high fever, headache, myalgia, coughing and sore throat.\(^1,2\) However, there are also other possible clinical manifestations of swine flu. In this specific article, the author discusses on the eye manifestation in swine flu.

Eye as a portal for swine flu entry

As a respiratory virus, the route of entry of swine flu virus is mainly the mouth and nose. However, swine flu is confirmed for feasibility to entry a human beings via eye.\(^1,2\) This can be explained by basic nanomedicine concept. The molecular size of swine flu virus is smaller than the conjunctival barrier pore. This is also the basic concept explaining on other viruses that can pass into the body via conjunctiva (such as human immunodeficiency virus). Based on this fact, it is confirmed that virus contaminated hands can be important vehicles bringing the virus into the human body via mouth as well as conjunctiva. This also implies the need of hand washing in control of swine flu.

Eye manifestation in swine flu, Exist? Important?

In general, eye manifestation is detectable in classical influenza. Influenza induced conjunctivitis is a basic clinical presentation.\(^3\) Several factors can lead to this manifestation. It might be due to many possible factors. It might be due to the inflammation resulted from infection.\(^3\)
Also, it might be due to severe coughing or sneezing or starching (which is usually due to itching sensation).

For atypical influenza, the conjunctivitis is also confirmed as an important eye manifestation in case of bird flu (H5N1 influenza virus infection).\textsuperscript{4-6}

However, focusing of the swine flu, there is no specific report on this topic. There is no data on importance of conjunctivitis as well as other eye manifestations in swine flu. In the official report on 36 death cases of Thai Ministry of Public Health (17 July 2009), there is no mentioning for the conjunctivitis as well as other eye manifestations in any death cases. Also, there is nothing about this item in the general infected cases. Hence, it is still a query if conjunctivitis as well as other eye manifestations are important clinical manifestations in swine flu. The author hereby conclude that eye manifestation, specially for conjunctivitis, might be detectable in swine flu but not an indicator for severity and might not be the hallmark presentation of this new emerging infection.

References