Letter to the Editor

Bacteriology of pilonidal cyst abscesses

The bacteriology of infected pilonidal cysts has received little attention in the literature. In a recent symposium on pilonidal disease there is no mention of culture and sensitivity studies in the presentations by the various panel members (Hanley, 1977).

We have cultured purulent exudate from 11 patients with infected pilonidal cysts aerobically and anaerobically.

The Table shows the ages and sex of the patients and the culture results. A mean of 2.5 anaerobes and 0.9 aerobes was isolated per specimen. Anaerobes were grown from all 11 specimens but only six contained aerobes. No aerobic Gram-negative rods were cultured. Gram-positive anaerobic cocci accounted for 45% of the total bacteria recovered and for 55% of the anaerobes. Bacteroides fragilis was isolated on one occasion. Five other species of Bacteroides were isolated including B. melaninogenicus, B. capillosus, B. putredinis, B. oralis, and Bacteroides species.

It has been stated that 'the lowly pilonidal sinus and cyst perhaps by virtue of their out-of-sight sacrococcygeal location have received little attention by the plastic surgeon' (Roth and Moorman, 1977). They have also escaped the attention of the microbiologist, probably because samples are not generally submitted for culture. Finegold (1977) cites 13 papers referring to the bacteriology of infected pilonidal cysts. At a recent conference on the Dilemma of Pilonidal Disease (Hanley, 1977) there was no mention of culture and sensitivity studies even though in one study of 175 patients 88.5% were infected at the time of admission (Eftaiha and Abcarian, 1977). Sandusky et al. (1942) studied 13 patients with infected pilonidal cysts. All 13 grew non-haemolytic anaerobic streptococci. There were eight isolates of Staphylococcus aureus and five of aerobic Gram-negative rods. Gram-positive anaerobic cocci accounted for 41% of the isolates from our patients. There was only one isolate of B. fragilis, and no aerobic Gram-negative rods were isolated.

The bacteriology of pilonidal cyst abscess is different from that of perirectal or buttck abscesses (Meislin et al., 1977). B. melaninogenicus and B. fragilis were isolated from 81% and 47% of perirectal abscesses and from 58% and 17% of buttck abscesses. Staph. aureus was isolated from one-third of buttck abscesses but from none of the perirectal abscesses. Aerobic Gram-negative rods were isolated from 10% of the perirectal abscesses but from none of the buttck abscesses.

Our study shows that anaerobes are the predominant isolates from pilonidal cyst abscesses.

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References


