Letter to the Editor

Vitamin D resistance and magnesium

Sir,

I read with much interest the paper by Nanji (1985) about the occurrence of hypercalcaemia due to iatrogenic hypervitaminosis D observed after correction of magnesium deficiency. Nanji stresses the several well-known mechanisms responsible for lowering serum calcium in magnesium deficiency, but in this patient with Crohn's disease receiving high doses of vitamin D and calcium the main factor seems to be the particular relationship between vitamin D and magnesium deficiency.

For almost 20 years, it has been known that magnesium deficiency reduces the response to vitamin D (Lifshitz et al., 1967). This is why, when magnesium and vitamin D are given together therapeutically, one should:

1. Never prescribe concomitant calcium (and phosphorus);
2. Never exceed an initially physiological daily dose of vitamin D for example 5 μg of 25 OH-vitamin D;
3. Systematically check plasma calcium (which should not exceed 2.5 mmol/l) and 24 hour calciuria (which should not exceed 4 mg/kg) for at least one month (Durlach, 1969, 1976, 1985).

A strict compliance with these 3 rules may avoid not only hypercalcaemia, but also tissue calcinosis, sometimes occurring without hypercalcaemia and therefore more difficult to prevent (Durlach, 1969, 1976, 1985).

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References
