Patterns of Congenital Heart Disease in Unoperated Adults: A 20-Year Experience in a Developing Country

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Summary

Background: The number of patients with congenital cardiac disease reaching adulthood is increasing steadily. Many adults with such disease face both medical and surgical difficulties.

Hypothesis: This retrospective study was undertaken to assess the frequency and outcome of congenital heart disease (CHD) in unoperated adults.

Methods: The charts of all patients with unoperated CHD, who were admitted to a tertiary care center in Beirut, Lebanon, between 1980 and 2000 were reviewed. Of these, 206 patients (52% men, age at admittance 18–71 years [32.8 ± 13.3 years]) with a diagnosis of CHD were evaluated. Atrial septal defect (ASD) was the most common cardiac malformation with a relative frequency of 53%, followed by ventricular septal defects (11%), tetralogy of Fallot (11%), aortic anomalies (7%), pulmonary stenosis (6%), and Ebstein anomaly (4%). Most patients were symptomatic upon presentation, with dyspnea on exertion being the most common presenting symptom. Twenty-seven patients (13%) had cyanotic CHD. Of 179 acyanotic patients, 113 (63%), and 17 of 27 cyanotic patients (63%) underwent surgical intervention. In-hospital surgical complications for the acyanotic group included cerebrovascular accident (2%) and heart block (1%). Total surgical mortality was 4 of 130 (3%). One patient with tetralogy of Fallot presented with endocarditis and died.

Conclusion: Atrial septal defect is the most common defect reported in our experience; however, it occurs more frequently than that reported in the literature. Although most patients were symptomatic on presentation, their functional status was stable. Accordingly, their hospital course, whether managed medically or surgically, held a relatively low complication rate. This could be attributed to the uncomplicated nature of pathologies in our series. The surgical mortality and in-hospital complications were slighter higher than those reported for similar lesions if repaired during childhood. This study reflects the relative frequency of various cardiac malformations in selected patients with “grown up” congenital heart disease (GUCH) and their natural survival pattern.

Key words: congenital heart disease, adults, developing country, grown up congenital heart

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