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Spectrum of childhood heart disease in Tunisia: rheumatic heart disease or congenital heart disease?

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Introduction and aim: Spectrum of childhood heart disease varies from country to another and may change over time. Through this study we aimed to provide the pattern of childhood heart disease in our public institution.

Methods: All patients under the age of 14 and referred to our department of cardiology in Hedi Chaker Hospital in Sfax for echocardiography, during three years, were included and analyzed. A focus on new referrals was made

Results:

During the period of study, among the 1971 patients studied, 1607 were new referrals. In this latter group, the proportion of normal scans was 56%. By far, the most frequent reason of the exam was cardiac murmur, which accounted for 40.8%.

In patients with abnormal finding, we counted 539 patients with congenital heart disease and 71 patients with acquired heart diseases. Left to right shunts were the commonest defect in 292 patients (54%), caused by ventricular septal defect in 156 patients, atrio-ventricular septal defect in 41 patients, atrial septal defect in 57 patients and patent ductus arteriosus in 38 patients. Tetralogy of Fallot was the commonest among the cyanotic defects (5.1%) followed by transposition of great arteries (3.7%). In acquired heart disease, Rheumatic heart disease, dilated cardiomyopathy and Kawasaki disease were the cause in 18%, 29% and 21% respectively.

Conclusion:

Heart diseases in Tunisian children are dominated by congenital heart disease. Rheumatic heart disease was not the majority cause of acquired heart disease and was lower than expected. A population based prevalence study is required to determine the full extent of this problem