Quantification of CSF chemokines and cytokines allows for rapid laboratory detection of CNS infections and further discrimination between viral and non-viral pathogens

Danielle Fortuna, MD
Department of Surgery, Thomas Jefferson University

AM Cardenas
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA

EH Graf

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Authors
Danielle Fortuna, MD; AM Cardenas; EH Graf; Amity L. Roberts, PhD, D(ABMM); Larry A. Harshyne, PhD; D. Craig Hooper, PhD; and Mark T. Curtis, MD, PhD

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Quantification of CSF chemokines and cytokines allows for rapid laboratory detection of CNS infections and further discrimination between viral and non-viral pathogens

D Fortuna 1, AM Cardenas 2, EH Graf 2, A Roberts 1, L Harshyne 1, DC Hooper 1 and MT Curtis 1

1 Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Philadelphia, PA, USA
2 Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, USA

ABSTRACT

Background: Prompt diagnosis of central nervous system (CNS) disease is critical to guide intervention and appropriate therapy. Development of novel laboratory approaches to rapidly classify acute-onset CNS disease is in great demand. Serious microbial pathogens, especially viruses, are quickly expanding beyond their historic geographic range and may not even be considered in clinicians’ differential diagnosis. Unlike bacterial cultures, current viral testing targets a limited number of viruses. Additionally, despite diversity in etiology, signs and symptoms of both infectious and non-infectious CNS disorders can be remarkably similar, which can confound the clinician’s care and delay treatment. Bacterial, viral, fungal and protozoan CNS pathogens are sensed by pattern recognition receptors of the immune system, stimulating immediate release of measurable levels of chemokines and cytokines into the CSF. Our objective is to use pathogen-specific chemokine/cytokine profiles to classify CNS disease as infectious versus non-infectious and further discriminate between viral and non-viral infections.

Methods: Levels (pg/ml) of chemokines and cytokines were determined in the CSF of 45 patients with documented infectious meningitis or meningoencephalitis (mean age 11.2 years) and in the CSF of 25 patients who were negative for CNS infection (mean age 27.9 years). MILLIPLEX MAP Human Cytokine/Chemokine Magnetic Bead Panel (Millipore) were used to measure CSF chemokines and cytokines levels (pg/ml). Immune analyte quantitation included IP-10 (CXCL10), IFN-γ, IL-15, MDC (CCL22), MCP-1 (CCL2), Fractalkine, and FFL3. Samples were analyzed in duplicate on the FlexMAP M/A (Luminex). Standard curves were generated for each cytokine and median fluorescent intensities were transformed into concentrations by 5-point, non-linear regression. For univariate analysis, comparisons between groups were made using the Mann-Whitney test. We utilized multivariate operating characteristic (ROC) curve analysis to calculate areas under the ROC curve (AUC) for each analyte to access the utility of chemokine/cytokine levels as discriminating tests. The ROC generated sensitivity and specificity values were then used to determine clinically optimal cutoff values for the informative analytes.

Results: Uni variate analysis utilizing Mann-Whitney tests demonstrated that median values (pg/ml) of IP-10 (CXCL10), IFN-γ, IL-15, MDC (CCL22), MCP-1 (CCL2), Fractalkine, and FFL3, were all significantly higher in CSF from patients with infectious brain disorders than in CSF from patients with non-infectious disorders (p-value < 0.05). MDC (CCL22) demonstrated statistical significance, when comparing viral infections versus non-viral infections (with the non-viral infection from patients with non-infectious disorders (p-value < 0.05). MDC (CCL22) demonstrated statistical significance, when comparing viral infections versus non-viral infections (with the non-viral infection from patients with non-infectious disorders (p-value < 0.05). MDC (CCL22) demonstrated statistical significance, when comparing viral infections versus non-viral infections (with the non-viral infection from patients with non-infectious disorders (p-value < 0.05). Among the infectious cases, MDC distinguished viral from non-viral infectious types processes.

We used PCA to visually represent the underlying structure of our data and examine the variability of specific cytokines/chemokines to help distinguish among CNS disease states (non-infectious and infectious, as well as viral versus non-viral infections).

RESULTS: PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS (PCA)

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with the variables IP10, IL15, MDC, FFL3L and Fractalkine

RESULTS: MANN-WHITNEY TEST OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mann-Whitney tests of significance for non parametric data

Levels of all studied cytokines (MCP1, IFNγ, IP10, IL15, MDC, FFL3L, and Fractalkine) were significantly higher in the infectious compared to the non-infectious group.

RESULTS: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND RECEIVER OPERATOR CURVES (ROC)

IP10/CCL10 can reliably distinguish between an infectious (all 1) versus non-infectious (C+ NI) CNS process (AUC 0.9778) with an optimal cut-off value of 2023 pg/ml (sensitivity, specificity: 93.0%, 92.0%).

Among the infectious cases, MDC distinguishes viral from non-viral infectious type processes.

CASE STUDY

16 year old woman with history of lupus presented with (NS) symptoms (statusa with decreased mental status and paralysis).

CSF studies were normal. CSF microbiology tests were negative.

CONCLUSIONS

• CSF levels (pg/ml) of IP-10/CCL10 can reliably distinguish infectious versus non-infectious CNS disorders

• In the infectious group, MDC/CCL22 can reliably distinguish between viral and non-viral CNS infections.

• CSF chemokine/cytokine quantification can serve as a useful laboratory tool for the rapid triage of CNS diseases to help guide prompt therapy and further testing.