Respiratory viruses are not associated with acute graft rejection during the acute phase of infection

Although several studies support the association between respiratory viruses and chronic lung rejection, the relationship between viral infection and acute rejection has not been established. In this prospective cohort study, bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL) fluid and biopsy specimens from 343 bronchoscopic procedures performed in 77 patients were analysed over 27 months from November 2003 through March 2006. Real-time reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction assays for detection of RNA respiratory viruses were performed on the BAL fluid specimens. The severity of acute rejection was graded as mild (A0, A1) to severe (A2—A4). The overall rate of viral infection in grade A0/A1 acute rejection cases was 25.4%, compared with 12.6% in grade A2 or higher rejection. Thus, patients with lower acute rejection grade were twice more likely to be positive for viral infection than those with higher rejection grades. The authors also found that in patients with simultaneous acute rejection and lower respiratory tract viral infection, the FEV1 recovery rate was significantly lower than in patients who had acute rejection without a simultaneous viral infection.

This study provides evidence that respiratory viruses per se do not promote acute graft rejection, at least during the acute phase of infection, but that they do worsen graft function recovery when simultaneously present with acute rejection.


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Published Online First 11 November 2010


Acknowledgements We are greatly saddened to report the recent death of Professor Robert Davies. The authors wish to thank Emma Headley, Margaret Chapman, Nicky Crotchwhite, Claire Manners and Magda Laskawiec from the Respiratory Trials Unit, Oxford.

Funding This study was funded by the NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre Programme.

Competing interests None.

Ethics approval This study was conducted with the approval of the Oxfordshire Regional Ethics Committee (reference 05/Q1605/5).

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

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