

UPPER LIMB INFECTIONS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN DIABETIC AND NON-DIABETIC PATIENTS

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Introduction: Upper limb infections are common among the diabetes patients and its sequelae can be debilitating. They tend to present with severe infections but with minimal symptoms. This could be due to the diabetes complications of neuropathy and vasculopathy. The aim of this study is to compare the demographic characteristics, clinical presentations and outcomes between diabetic and non-diabetic patients.

Methodology: A total of 244 patients with upper limb infections were admitted in University Malaya Medical Centre (UMMC) from June 2017 to December 2020. Demographic data, clinical presentations, investigations and outcomes were obtained retrospectively from electronic medical record. There were 117 patients with diabetes mellitus and 127 with no diabetes mellitus. Comparisons were made between these 2 groups and statistical analysis were done with SPSS.

Discussion: There were 244 patients included; 117 were diabetic and 127 were non-diabetic. Diabetic patients were more likely to present with emergent scenarios, especially necrotizing fasciitis and infective tenosynovitis ($p < 0.05$) with higher erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) and C-reactive protein (CRP) readings ($p < 0.05$). Their microbiological cultures were less likely to be negative ($p < 0.05$). Diabetic patients also had poorer clinical outcomes with higher risk of amputation, re-operation and longer duration of hospital stay ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Upper limb infections among diabetes patients should be treated aggressively. Early diagnosis and surgical intervention may decrease the morbidity and mortality in this group. Prevention of infections should be emphasized.