INHALED STEROID THERAPY IMPROVES BRONCHIECTASIS

Bronchiectasis is a very common respiratory disease among the Chinese and Orientals in general. However, there has been little research undertaken on bronchiectasis. Poor understanding of the pathology of bronchiectasis has resulted in a lack of effective treatment for these patients.

In 1998, a study of the Department of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, the University of Hong Kong (HKU), revealed that, inhaled corticosteroid (ICS) therapy reduces airway inflammation in bronchiectasis, which is regarded as a major pathogenic element in bronchiectasis. Recently, the HKU team has completed a 12-month study, which was the first double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized study to evaluate the clinical efficacy of ICS in patients with stable bronchiectasis. Results showed that, ICS treatment is beneficial to bronchiectasis patients, significant improvements in sputum volume and exacerbation frequency are reported especially in patients with Pseudomonas aeruginosa (PA) infection.

Bronchiectasis occurs when the large airways are dilated permanently. This would result in poor drainage of mucus and dirt from the lungs, and therefore infection and inflammation. There are many causes of bronchiectasis although all affected patients present with similar symptoms. Patients with bronchiectasis suffer from regular production of sputum, cough, shortness of breath, recurrent exacerbations, and progressive deterioration of lung health. Many severely affected patients harbour PA in their airway, which is associated with more severe symptoms and more extensive lung damage.