

Aim of the study: To find out the basic epidemiological, clinical and laboratory characteristics of acute bacterial meningitis, as well as treatment, complications, consequences and causes of death and then to evaluate the possible preventive measures.

Material and methods: Adult patients with acute bacterial meningitis of community or hospital origin treated at the selected infectious diseases department were included in a longitudinal observational study. Demographic and anamnestic data, informations about the course, treatment, complications and consequences of the disease were retrospectively obtained from medical records.

Results: From 2006–2008, 91 adult patients (51 men, 40 women) aged 17 to 84 years with a median of 54 years were hospitalized. Nosocomial meningitis occurred in 2 cases. Predisposing disease or internal comorbidity were present in 74 % of patients. The triad of fever, meningism and changed mental status was present in 53 % of patients. All laboratory signs of purulent inflammation in the cerebrospinal fluid were found in 59 % of patients. The three most common pathogens were *S. pneumoniae* (37 %), *N. meningitidis* (16 %) and *L. monocytogenes* (13 %). Two thirds of patients survived the disease without serious consequences, one third of patients either survived with serious consequences or died. Overall mortality was 16 %; intracranial complications were the cause of death in 67 % of patients.

Conclusion: Although acute bacterial meningitis is a disease with low incidence, its severity remains high, what is confirmed by the fact, that every third patient survived the disease with serious consequences or died. The main preventive measure to reduce the incidence of disease is to identify high-risk individuals and to protect them by vaccination. Awareness of physicians about the warning signs of meningitis is a prerequisite for the urgent diagnosis and treatment initiation. Such a strategy, according to current opinions may reduce the risk of developing complications and consequences of this disease.