

PAPILLARY THYROID CANCER AND AUTOIMMUNE THYROIDITIS

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Background/Purpose: Association of autoimmune thyroiditis (AIT) and papillary thyroid cancer (PTC) has been recognized since 1955. Coexistence of these diseases has been well documented, but causality is still a matter of debate. Pathogenetic links between PTC and AIT try to explain two theories: 1/ PTC is induced or facilitated by AIT, 2/ AIT is a response to PTC. It is believed that PTC associated to AIT has a better prognosis and survival.

Methods: Histological and laboratory results of 574 differentiated thyroid cancer (DTC) patients were reviewed. Diagnosis of AIT was based on histological finding and/or high antiTPO levels (≥ 5 -times over upper reference range limit).

Results: The incidence of AIT in DTC patients was 33,4%, 3- times higher compared to general population. DTC was diagnosed earlier (better TNM stage), with even higher PTC incidence (95%), classic subtype was the most frequent one. On the other hand in some patients PTC had an insidious course: lymph node metastases were detected without any ultrasonographically (USG) detectable nodule in thyroid gland. Histology revealed multifocal microcarcinoma or diffuse sclerosing variant.

Discussion & Conclusion: We detected a high incidence of AIT in DTC/PTC patients. In spite of better prognosis, in some of them an insidious course of PTC was found out. We recommend a close observation for neoplastic changes in patients with AIT.