A Review of the Diagnosis and Management of Reflux Disease: Toward Creating a Clinical Protocol for the Otolaryngologist

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INTRODUCTION

Reflux disease, including gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and laryngopharyngeal reflux (LPR), is a highly prevalent condition. The aim of this paper is to review the literature on the diagnosis and treatment of reflux disease in the otolaryngology literature.

METHODS

A PubMed search was performed looking for clinical practice guidelines on either GERD or LPR. Five hundred and seventy articles were identified and the most clinically relevant practice guidelines were selected.

RESULTS

In Table 2 we stratify the severity of reflux disease complications with possible alarm symptoms in terms of mild (low complexity, low risk), moderate (complications or associations with reflux that require further evaluation and monitoring), and severe (those that may result in life-threatening complications). While this stratification is not explicitly stated in the above-mentioned protocols, it is clear that identifying, evaluating, and treating higher-risk disease should be integral to any clinical practice model for reflux.

CONCLUSIONS

Evidence-based clinical practice guidelines exist in the literature to support the routine care of patients with GERD, and these may be considered to be applicable to patients with LPR. While there are many clinical aspects of reflux disease that still remain a mystery, there is enough literature to support a rudimentary clinical protocol at this time.