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PCR Analysis of HSV-Negative Erythema Multiforme for the Expression of Other Herpesviruses

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Abstract: Background: Herpes simplex virus (HSV) is the primary herpesvirus implicated to have a causal role in erythema multiforme (EM), both in cases with an antecedent herpetic infection and in idiopathic EM. However, the association of EM with several other viral infections has been clearly documented. Objective: The aim of the present study was to investigate a hypothetical role for the remaining members of the herpesvirus family in HSV-negative cases of EM. Methods: Fresh, unfixed lesional skin biopsies from 25 patients with HSV-negative EM were studied for the presence of Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), cytomegalovirus (CMV), human herpesvirus-6 (HHV-6) and human herpesvirus-7 (HHV-7) by using polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and nested PCR. Results: PCR revealed the absence of specific DNA sequences for EBV, CMV, HHV-6 and HHV-7 in all lesional EM specimens analyzed. Conclusion: These findings do not support an etiological role for non-HSV members of the herpesvirus family in HSV-negative EM.

Key Words: Erythema multiforme, Epstein-Barr virus, cytomegalovirus, human herpesvirus-6, human herpesvirus-7, polymerase chain reaction

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