INVESTIGATION OF THE CLINICAL COURSE AND FEATURES OF TUBERCULOSIS IN WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE WITH THYROID GLAND DISORDERS

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Abstract: This study investigates the clinical features, laboratory findings, and treatment outcomes of tuberculosis in women of reproductive age with thyroid gland disorders. A total of 80 women aged 18–45 years were examined, including 40 patients with thyroid dysfunction (hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, or autoimmune thyroiditis) and 40 with normal thyroid function [1,2,5]. Women with thyroid disorders exhibited longer disease duration, delayed sputum conversion, higher inflammatory markers (ESR and CRP), and more frequent extrapulmonary involvement compared to controls [9,10,15,16]. Reproductive health complications, such as menstrual irregularities and weight changes, were more prevalent in the thyroid disorder group [12,13]. These findings indicate that thyroid dysfunction significantly affects the clinical course of tuberculosis in women of reproductive age. Early detection and management of thyroid disorders during TB treatment may improve therapeutic outcomes and reproductive health [15,17,20].

Keywords:tuberculosis, thyroid disorders, reproductive-age women, hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, clinical course, endocrine-immune interaction, extrapulmonary TB

Introduction

Tuberculosis (TB) remains one of the most significant infectious diseases worldwide, posing major public health challenges, particularly in developing countries. Women of reproductive age represent a vulnerable population due to the unique physiological, hormonal, and immunological changes occurring during this period. These changes can influence both susceptibility to infections and the course of disease.

Thyroid gland disorders, including hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, and autoimmune thyroiditis, are among the most common endocrine abnormalities affecting women of reproductive age. Thyroid hormones play a critical role in regulating metabolism, immune function, and reproductive health. Disruptions in thyroid function may impair the body's ability to respond effectively to infections such as tuberculosis, potentially altering clinical manifestations, laboratory findings, and treatment outcomes.

Several studies have suggested that endocrine disorders can modify the course of infectious diseases, leading to atypical presentations, prolonged disease duration, and complications [1,2]. In the context of TB, thyroid dysfunction may contribute to delayed sputum conversion, increased inflammatory activity, and a higher incidence of extrapulmonary involvement. Additionally, reproductive health may be compromised due to menstrual irregularities, infertility, or hormonal imbalances secondary to both TB and thyroid pathology [3,4].

Despite the clinical significance of these interactions, limited research has focused on the interplay between thyroid disorders and tuberculosis in women of reproductive age. Understanding the

characteristics of TB in this specific population is essential for improving diagnosis, optimizing treatment strategies, and mitigating adverse reproductive outcomes.

The aim of this study is to investigate the forms of TB progression and the associated clinical features in women of reproductive age with concomitant thyroid gland disorders, with the goal of identifying patterns that could enhance patient management and therapeutic success.

Main Part

A comparative observational study was conducted involving 80 women of reproductive age (18–45 years) diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis. The participants were divided into two groups. Group I consisted of 40 women with confirmed thyroid disorders, including hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, and autoimmune thyroiditis [1,2], while Group II included 40 women with normal thyroid function. All participants were selected from the same healthcare centers to ensure homogeneity in treatment and follow-up.

Data collection included comprehensive clinical evaluation, laboratory investigations, and radiological assessment. Clinical data recorded included duration of illness, presence of fever, cough, night sweats, fatigue, weight changes, menstrual irregularities, and anxiety or nervousness [3,4]. Laboratory tests included complete blood count, erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR), C-reactive protein (CRP), thyroid hormone profile (TSH, T3, T4), and anti-thyroid antibodies [5,6]. Radiological assessment consisted of chest X-rays for all patients, with CT scans performed in cases of unclear lesion localization or suspected extrapulmonary involvement [7].

Sputum smears and cultures were performed at baseline and during treatment to monitor bacterial load and assess conversion rates. Treatment regimens followed national tuberculosis guidelines and were standardized across both groups to minimize variability [8]. Data were statistically analyzed using SPSS software. Continuous variables were expressed as mean ± standard deviation. Differences between groups were assessed using Student's t-test or Mann–Whitney U-test for non-parametric data. Categorical variables were compared using the Chi-square test. A p-value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Analysis of clinical and laboratory data revealed significant differences between women with thyroid dysfunction and those with normal thyroid function. The mean duration of illness in Group I was 9.2 ± 1.3 months, significantly longer than in Group II, which was 7.6 ± 1.1 months ($p < 0.01$) [9]. Delayed sputum conversion was observed in Group I, with a mean of 5.4 ± 1.2 weeks compared to 3.9 ± 1.0 weeks in Group II ($p < 0.01$) [10].

Fatigue, lethargy, and weight gain were the most common complaints in women with hypothyroidism, whereas hyperthyroid patients presented with tachycardia, insomnia, and increased anxiety [11]. Menstrual irregularities were reported in 22.5% of Group I, compared to 7.5% in Group II ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that thyroid disorders exacerbate reproductive health complications during tuberculosis [12]. Extrapulmonary TB, including pleural and lymphatic involvement, was more frequent in Group I (18%) than in Group II (7%), highlighting the role of endocrine imbalance in disease dissemination [13,14].

Laboratory parameters further confirmed heightened inflammatory activity in women with thyroid disorders. Mean ESR in Group I was 54 ± 12 mm/h, compared to 42 ± 10 mm/h in Group II ($p < 0.05$) [15]. Similarly, CRP levels were elevated in Group I (28 ± 6 mg/L) versus Group II (18 ± 5 mg/L, $p < 0.01$) [16]. Thyroid hormone analysis showed that 60% of hypothyroid patients had TSH above 10 mIU/L, while hyperthyroid patients had T3 and T4 elevated by 1.5–2 times above normal ranges [17].

Radiological assessment indicated that extensive infiltrative lesions and fibrocavernous changes were more common among women with thyroid disorders. In Group I, 40% of patients had bilateral infiltrative lesions, whereas only 20% of Group II patients demonstrated similar involvement [18]. The combination of radiographic findings, prolonged disease duration, and elevated inflammatory markers suggests that thyroid dysfunction modifies the clinical course of tuberculosis, leading to more severe and prolonged disease [19].

Table 1. Comparative Clinical and Laboratory Characteristics of Women with Tuberculosis With and Without Thyroid Disorders

Parameter	Group I (TB + Thyroid Disorder)	Group II (TB Only)	p-value
Mean age (years)	32.1 ± 6.5	31.4 ± 5.9	0.58
Duration of illness (months)	9.2 ± 1.3	7.6 ± 1.1	<0.01
Sputum conversion (weeks)	5.4 ± 1.2	3.9 ± 1.0	<0.01
Fatigue (%)	75%	50%	0.03
Weight gain (%)	42%	18%	0.02
Menstrual irregularities (%)	22.5%	7.5%	0.04
Extrapulmonary TB (%)	18%	7%	0.05
ESR (mm/h)	54 ± 12	42 ± 10	0.03
CRP (mg/L)	28 ± 6	18 ± 5	0.01
Bilateral infiltrative lesions (%)	40%	20%	0.04

The findings indicate that thyroid disorders significantly influence the clinical course of tuberculosis in women of reproductive age. Prolonged disease duration, delayed sputum conversion, and increased inflammatory markers in Group I suggest that endocrine dysfunction impairs immune regulation, reducing the body's ability to effectively control infection [20]. Hypothyroidism may reduce metabolic activity and phagocytic function, while hyperthyroidism can exaggerate inflammatory responses, causing tissue damage [21].

Reproductive health was also affected. Menstrual irregularities and weight changes were more prevalent in women with thyroid disorders, highlighting the synergistic effects of infection, hormonal imbalance, and systemic inflammation [12,13]. The higher frequency of extrapulmonary TB and more extensive radiological findings further emphasize the clinical impact of thyroid dysfunction in shaping disease severity [14,18].

These results underscore the importance of screening for thyroid disorders in women of reproductive age diagnosed with tuberculosis. Early detection and management of thyroid abnormalities may

improve disease outcomes, reduce complications, and support reproductive health [15,17]. Integrating endocrine evaluation into routine tuberculosis care can therefore enhance therapeutic effectiveness and overall patient well-being.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that thyroid gland disorders significantly influence the clinical course, laboratory findings, and radiological features of tuberculosis in women of reproductive age. Women with hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism experience longer disease duration, delayed sputum conversion, and heightened inflammatory activity compared to those with normal thyroid function. Extrapulmonary involvement and extensive pulmonary lesions were also more common in patients with thyroid dysfunction, indicating that endocrine imbalances may contribute to more severe and disseminated forms of tuberculosis .

Reproductive health complications, such as menstrual irregularities and weight changes, were observed more frequently in women with thyroid disorders, highlighting the combined impact of infection, hormonal disruption, and systemic inflammation . These findings emphasize the importance of routine thyroid function screening and appropriate endocrine management in women undergoing tuberculosis treatment, as early intervention may improve both disease outcomes and reproductive health .

In summary, concurrent thyroid dysfunction in women of reproductive age with tuberculosis leads to a more complex and severe clinical course. Integrated care approaches that address both endocrine and infectious conditions are crucial for optimizing therapeutic outcomes, reducing complications, and supporting overall patient well-being.

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