

Materials and Methods

Medical records of all individuals with alopecia areata (AA) visiting the hair disease clinic of the dermatology department of the Chaim Sheba Medical Center, Israel, between January 2009 and April 2015 were retrospectively reviewed. Those with first onset of AA at age ≥ 50 years were defined as suffering from late-onset disease. Only individuals for whom information was complete and who had at least 1 year of follow-up after initial AA diagnosis were included. Diagnosis was based on a clinical examination, including trichoscopy. Diffuse pattern diagnosis was confirmed via skin biopsy. The study was carried out in accordance with the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki and was approved by the local ethics committee.

Data were collected from patients' charts as well as via telephone questionnaire administered by 2 dermatologists. Evaluated characteristics included age of onset, gender, past medical history (including autoimmune and atopic background), family history of AA, atopy and autoimmunity, major stressful events preceding disease onset, disease characteristics (including clinical pattern and extent), nail involvement, treatments received, and course of disease upon follow-up.

The clinical presentation parameters of the first episode of the disease were evaluated, including area of involvement, clinical pattern, and extent. Area of disease involvement was divided into scalp, beard, eyebrows and eyelashes, body, extremities, and nails. Scalp involvement pattern was defined as mild patchy (<3 patches of alopecia), severe patchy (≥ 3 patches), ophiasis (band-like alopecic patch on the occipital area), and diffuse pattern. The extent of disease was categorized as that which was limited to the scalp, ranging from partial hair loss to entire scalp hair loss (alopecia totalis), and entire body hair loss (alopecia universalis).

Disease severity at presentation was assessed according to the Severity of Alopecia Tool (SALT) score of the Alopecia Areata Investigational Assessment Guidelines Criteria. The SALT subclasses for scalp hair are S0, no hair loss; S1, $\leq 24\%$ hair loss; S2, 25–49% hair loss; S3, 50–74% hair loss; S4, 75–99% hair loss; and S5, 100% hair loss. Body hair loss was rated as none, some, or 100% loss (B0, B1, and B2, respectively); nail involvement was rated as none (N0) or some (N1) [12].

Disease course, including time until initial hair regrowth following the first episode of disease, duration and outcome of the first episode, and relapses, was evaluated. Time until initial hair regrowth was divided into 3 periods: < 3 months, 3–6 months, and > 6 months. The duration of the episode was divided into < 6 months and > 6 months.

Outcome was divided into 5 categories: further hair loss, no hair regrowth, nonsignificant hair regrowth ($< 50\%$), significant hair regrowth ($\geq 50\%$), and complete hair regrowth (100%). The number and pattern of relapses were recorded.

Statistical evaluation was performed using the Fisher exact test and χ^2 tests.