

ABSTRACT

An open label randomized comparison of parenteral doxycycline, cefotaxime, and penicillin G in suspected severe leptospirosis was conducted in 540 patients admitted to four hospitals in North Eastern Thailand. Of these 252 (47%) had serological or culture confirmed leptospirosis. Overall mortality was 4.8%. There were no significant differences between the antibiotics in mortality, defervescence or time to resolve laboratory overall, or in the subgroup of patients with confirmed leptospirosis. Rickettsial infection was diagnosed in 132 patients, and in these patients doxycycline was superior to penicillin. Doxycycline or cefotaxime are satisfactory alternatives to penicillin for treatment of severe leptospirosis.