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A Case of Dirty Dermatosi (Dermatitis Neglecta)

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Abstract

Dermatitis Neglecta, also known dermatosis neglecta refers to a dermatological condition that occurs from lack of hygiene. It is a condition that results from insufficient frictional cleansing leading to accumulation of corneocytes sebum and sweat eventually resulting in hyperpigmented patch or verrucous plaque. Regular bathing is very important for keeping the skin clean. Bathing and scrubbing the skin helps to remove germs, oils, and dead skin cells. Lack of bathing for a long time can also cause dermatitis neglecta. We are presenting a case of 22 years old boy who had itching in the scrotum for 4 years and he was being treated for scabies and tinea cruris by various practitioners. On observation, we found it to be covered with dark coloured raised lesions, after we rubbed it with cotton and spirit, we found it to be Dermatitis Neglecta of scrotum. Terra firma forme dermatosis is differentiated from it by presence of sufficient hygiene, absence of corn flake-like brownish scales and successful annihilation of pigmentation with isopropyl alcohol in the former and effective clearance of lesions with soap and water in the latter. However, isopropyl alcohol is operative in both disorders.

Key words: Dermatitis neglecta; Isopropyl alcohol, Scrotum pathology, Skin care

Introduction

Dermatitis Neglecta is a very common misdiagnosed condition.¹ Dermatitis Neglecta occurs due to insufficient cleaning of the skin.² The common sites involved are neck, armpits, and inguinal area. Very few cases have been reported till date.³ We report a very interesting case of Dermatitis Neglecta of scrotum.

Case Report

A 22-year-old boy came to our clinic with complain of itching in the scrotal region for 4 years. The boy had been to various dermatological clinics and was treated for fungal infection and scabies without a relief. On examination, he had a greasy and hyper pigmented plaque covering the scrotum with sparing some area (Figure 1). The scrotal area was cleaned with cotton swab and spirit (isopropyl alcohol) the lesions were partially cleared with removal of some dirt and debris over the cotton swab, revealing the near normal skin (Figure 2). Hence, the diagnosis was made as dermatitis neglecta.

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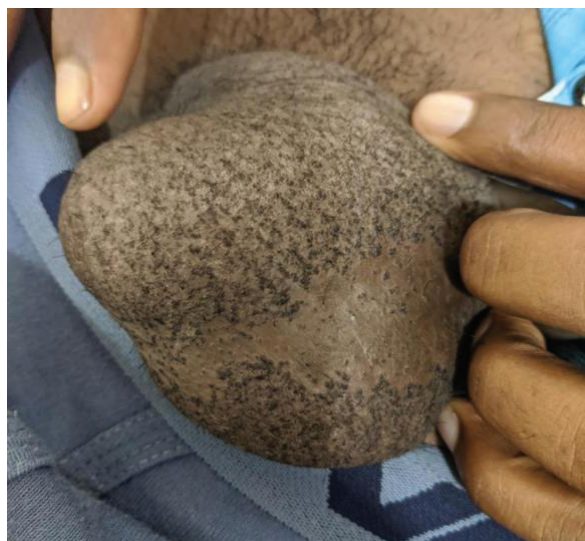


Figure 1: Greasy and hyperpigmented plaque

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Figure 2: Area partially cleared with cotton swab and spirit over scrotum

The patient had no mental or psychiatric problem. He was counseled about hygiene practice and was prescribed with an antihistamine and moisturizer as treatment.

Discussion

Dermatitis Neglecta also known as the unwashed dermatosis was first described by Poskitt et al in 1995.⁴ The dermatosis is caused in individuals with poor hygienic conditions as it is also commonly seen in bed ridden patients and in old patients who cannot take bath daily and cannot maintain proper hygienic

conditions. Inadequate cleansing and atrocious hygiene in an area of immobility, pain, hyperesthesia, prior trauma, and surgery leading to poor exfoliation of skin are ought to be the provocative factors.^{5,6} Poskitt et al.⁴ stated that dermatitis neglecta is a consequence of willful and subconscious self-neglect, which is unlike from dermatitis artefacta that the lesions are not produced or aggravated by the patient's own actions. In dermatitis neglecta, denial from patient's side regarding lack of hygiene is not unusual. Vigorous rubbing with alcohol-soaked gauze or soap and water results in a complete resolution of the lesion. Patients should be counseled and encouraged that the maintenance of proper hygiene of the disabled affected region is beneficial rather than harmful. Daily light scrubbing of the affected area with soap and water or alcohol is adequate in most cases.

Dermatitis neglecta should be kept in mind in the differential diagnosis of all hyper pigmented localized lesions, especially in bedridden, handicapped and old patients. Alcohol swabbing serves as a diagnostic and therapeutic apparatus in dermatitis neglecta. Swabbing with soap and water also produces more or less similar result; evident in our patient.

Limitation: Patient did not return for follow up, so complete clearance cannot be shown.

Conclusion

Dermatitis neglected can be treated and prevented by simple maintenance of proper hygiene. Proper awareness among clinicians will reduce the rate of misdiagnosis and improper treatment.

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