Recent onset pruritic papular eruptions in apparently healthy Indian adults: A clue to suspect AIDS

Sir,

Pruritic papular eruption (PPE) is seen in 12%–46% of AIDS patients. The appearance of PPE in HIV patients is an indicator of advanced disease and severe immunosuppression. We report three cases of apparently healthy Indian adults with PPE lesions on skin, ELISA test for HIV was positive and decreased CD4 cell count.

Three adults (one male and two females) presented with itchy skin lesions for 1–8 months. The skin lesions included papules, excoriated papules, nodules, postinflammatory hyperpigmentation, hypopigmentation, and scars [Figures 1-3]. They were distributed all over the body with increased predilection for the extensors of the extremities. In addition, the first case had whitish deposit over the tongue (candidiasis) and verrucous papule on the coronal sulcus and adjoining area of the genital mucosa (condyloma acuminata), case 2 had a superficial ulcer of size 6 cm × 7 cm on the genital mucosa with arcuate border, and case 3 had reactivation of pulmonary tuberculosis treated 3 years back. There was no history suggestive of atopy or eczema. Based on the history and examination; cases were suspected of having immunosuppression due to HIV infection. HIV test by ELISA was positive and venereal disease research laboratory test (VDRL) test done to rule out Syphilis was negative. The CD4 counts of the three cases were 73 cells/mm³, 84 cells/mm³, and 131 cells/mm³, respectively. The PPE lesions were treated with oral cetirizine hydrochloride 10 mg/daily and topical application of clobetasol propionate twice daily, and the patients were advised to use protective clothes. Case 1 received oral fluconazole 100 mg daily for 14 days, and 20% podophyllum resin application weekly for oral candidiasis and condyloma acuminate, respectively. Case 2 was given oral acyclovir 400 mg thrice daily for 14 days for herpes genitalis. Both the cases (1 and 2) improved and all the three cases were referred to anti-retroviral therapy (ART) center for registration and initiation of anti-retroviral drug.

DISCUSSION

Occurrence of noninfectious and opportunistic infections in HIV/AIDS depend on the immune status of an individual. Especially in HIV/AIDS, the occurrence of noninfectious and infectious skin lesions may be
of diagnostic, prognostic value and may indicate immunosuppression. Till date, the diagnoses of HIV/AIDS is mostly from clinical suspicion followed by investigations. Hence, it is necessary for clinicians to get used to the various morphologies of infectious and non-infectious conditions and their implication.

Recently, WHO has included PPE in the clinical diagnosis and staging of HIV/AIDS in adults and adolescents (i.e. Stage 2 HIV/AIDS disease). However, PPE alone has not been indicated for the diagnosis of HIV/AIDS.

PPE is frequently reported from India, Africa, and Nigeria in AIDS patients and lesions indicated of severe immunosuppression. Jiamton et al. hypothesized PPE lesions in HIV/AIDS are result of hypersensitivity response in severely immunosuppressed (HIV/AIDS) patients to insect bite, and mosquito saliva. Our cases were from rural area and exposed to insect bite.

From the present series of three Indian adults with PPE lesions occurring over 1 year, later confirmed HIV by ELISA test and lone PPE was an only the consistent skin finding. Hence, authors hypothesize that the recent onset PPE alone in Indian adults may be a clue to clinical suspect immunosuppression due to HIV/AIDS. However, a large cohort study of HIV/AIDS patients with PPE is required to validate our findings.

Declarations of patient consent
The authors certify that they have obtained all appropriate patient consent forms. In the form the patient(s) has/have given his/her/their consent for his/her/their images and other clinical information to be reported in the journal. The patients understand that their names and initials will be published and due efforts will be made to conceal their identity, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

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Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

Chandra Sekhar Sirka, Swetalina Pradhan, Bajayanimala Mishra
Departments of Dermatology and Venereology and Microbiology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Chandra Sekhar Sirka, Department of Dermatology and Venereology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhubaneswar - 751 019, Odisha, India.
E-mail: csirka2006@gmail.com

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