Keratosis follicularis spinulosa decalvans

Sir,

Keratosis follicularis spinulosa decalvans (KFSD) is a rare, usually X-linked recessive disorder presenting with progressive cicatricial alopecia of the scalp and eyebrows. Males are more commonly affected. Treatment with emollients, keratolytics and retinoids may be helpful.

A 15-year-old boy, fifth child of a non-consanguineous marriage, presented to us with complaints of recurrent, raised, scaly, itchy lesions over the scalp of 7 years duration. Symptoms started 7 years back when his mother noticed some red, raised lesions on a few areas over the scalp. Lesions were mildly itchy and oozzy at times. Gradually, the lesions increased in size and number to involve the forehead, nape of the neck and eyebrows. Later, he noticed a reduction in hair density of the scalp and eyebrows. He had several exacerbations and remissions since then. There was no significant response to treatment from various doctors. His siblings and other family members were unaffected.

On examination, there was patchy involvement of the scalp, nape of the neck, forehead and supraorbital ridges in the form of multiple, discrete to confluent erythematous papules and scaly plaques of varying sizes [Figures 1a and b and 2a]. Multiple variably sized patches of scarring alopecia were present on the scalp, predominantly over the occipital and temporal areas. Scarring alopecia involving the lateral half of both eyebrows was seen [Figure 1c and d]. Multiple tiny follicular papules were present on the axilla and back [Figure 2b and c]. Bilaterally symmetrical plantar keratoderma was also present [Figure 2d]. Mild scaling was seen in the inguinal region. Investigations revealed a mild leukocytosis of 12,600/cumm (normal range: 4000–11,000/cumm) and eosinophilia with an absolute eosinophil count of 3150/cumm (normal: 450/cumm). Serum IgE was 4654 U/ml (normal: 150–1000 U/ml). Pus culture showed growth of *Staphylococcus aureus*. Stool for ova was negative.

Skin biopsy from the scalp revealed acanthosis with hyperkeratosis over the hair follicle epithelium with inflammatory changes in the dermis [Figure 3]. Characteristic follicular plugging and a moderate inflammatory infiltrate, especially around appendages...
and vessels were present. The infiltrate was mainly lymphocytic in nature. The patient was treated with 12.5 mg of acitretin and emollients after an initial course of antibiotics. Significant resolution of lesions was observed after 8 weeks. Oral retinoids were continued for a total of 16 weeks. No recurrence was seen in 6 months and he is still on regular follow-up [Figure 4].

Keratosis follicularis spinulosa decalvans is a rare type of scarring alopecia described initially by Macleod, characterized by lymphocytic predominance in histological sections.[1-3] This condition, along with keratosis atrophicans facei and atrophoderma vermiculatum represent closely related disorders. Though usually inherited in an X-linked recessive pattern, autosomal forms and sporadic cases have also been frequently reported. Family history of similar disorders may not always be evident. The condition usually begins at an early age with generalized keratosis pilaris and gradually progresses to scarring alopecia along with ocular changes such as photophobia and corneal dystrophy.[4] The alopecia may be patchy and limited, or even widespread. Exacerbation at puberty with the eruption of pustules, crusting and extensive scaling on the scalp may occur. Therapy is generally symptomatic. Among treatment options, topical keratolytics, emollients and Vitamin A derivatives have been known to show some benefit.[5,6] Therapy is most beneficial when administered early in childhood. In the pustular variant, systemic antibiotics have been used to improve pustular flares.

Our patient had all the classical features of keratosis follicularis spinulosa decalvans with the exception of eye changes. He also had laboratory features suggestive of an atopic diathesis which is a well-known association.[7] Other reported associations include Noonan's syndrome, deafness, cutis laxa, large pinnae, clinodactyly and aminoaciduria.[8] Plantar keratoderma in our case was mild and diffuse but focal plantar keratoderma is known to be an association.[9] In this case, seborrheic dermatitis was a close differential diagnosis. However, the presence of follicular papules on the scalp, nape of the neck and rest of the body along with scarring alopecia, especially of the eyebrows and involvement beyond hairline helped to exclude this condition. Lichen planopilaris was ruled out due to the presence of eyebrow involvement, follicular papules on the nape of the neck and extensive scaling. Histopathology was helpful in ruling out some of the other differential diagnoses and was supportive of keratosis follicularis spinulosa decalvans, where the diagnosis is mainly clinical.

Declaration 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 not be published and anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Financial support and sponsorship
Nil.

Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

Rajesh Verma, Anuj Bhatnagar, Biju Vasudevan, Sushil Kumar
Department of Dermatology, Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Address for correspondence: Dr. Anuj Bhatnagar, Department of Dermatology, Armed Forces Medical College, Pune - 411 040, Maharashtra, India. E-mail: anuj1872@yahoo.co.in

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Three cases of suspected chloracne in a family from Pune

Sir,

Chloracne is an eruption of acne-like comedones, cysts and pustules following systemic absorption of aromatic hydrocarbons (‘chloracnegens’) having a specific molecular configuration containing two benzene rings with halogen atoms occupying at least three of the lateral ring positions.[1,2] Typically found as trace contaminants during synthesis of industrial chemicals, chloracnegens include dioxins especially 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxins, naphthalenes, biphenyls, dibenzofurans, azobenzenes and azoxybenzenes. Von Bettman first reported this eruption secondary to exposure to chlorine. Herxheimer coined the term ‘chloracne’ based upon the lesional resemblance to acne vulgaris. However, the term chloracne is a misnomer in view of the characteristic disappearance of sebaceous glands, reduced rate of sebum excretion, xerosis and paucity of Propionibacterium acnes.[3]

A 40-year-old woman employed since 2 months for brushing the dye off clothes in a small cottage industry employing three persons, presented with complaints of reddish, itchy eruptions that appeared sequentially over the face and trunk within 3 weeks. Examination revealed multiple comedones and a few inflammatory papules and pustules involving the forehead and peripheral area of face especially the mandibular area. A few lesions were also present on the chest, axillae and thighs. Cysts were seen mainly over the neck and sternum [Figure 1a and b]. General physical, ophthalmological and systemic examinations were non-contributory. Liver function tests and lipid profile were normal. Both her children had slaty hyperpigmentation, comedones and inflammatory pustules over forehead, cheeks and submandibular area [Figure 1c and d], which were more prominent in her 4-year-old girl than her 3-year-old boy.

Histopathology of the lesion on the chest revealed dilated cystic follicular infundibula filled with keratin. The clinico-pathological picture, history of chemical exposure and unusual age for acne vulgaris prompted a diagnosis of chloracne. In the absence of facility for chemical analysis, it was thought that the amine releasing azo dye could be the probable cause. The patient was advised to seek alternative employment in view of the reported recalcitrance of chloracne. Isotretinoin (0.5 mg/kg daily) was administered considering her persistent demand for treatment. Patient discontinued her job at the dyeing factory and follow up after 6 months revealed appreciable regression with only a few residual lesions present over her chest [Figure 1e and f] and complete subsidence of lesions in her children. Lesional biopsy from the chest continued to reveal dilated keratin-filled infundibular cyst, and absent sebaceous glands with minimal chronic perifollicular infiltrate [Figure 2a and b].

Chloracne, a well-recognized, poorly understood condition, is one of the most sensitive markers of exposure to chloracnegens developing within a few weeks of systemic absorption following bodily contact,