

ERYTHEMA AB IGNE REPORT OF A CASE

By

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Erythema ab Igne is a peculiar reticular pigmentation showing annular or gyrate configuration which develops on those parts of the body which are repeatedly and persistently exposed to heat.

CASE REPORT

An old man K. C. of 70 years of age presented with the complaint of pigmented reticular network on the palm of left hand for the last two years, which was symptomless. The patient was also complaining of cough and expectoration for the last about six months, for which he was been investigated in the medical section being suspected of carcinoma of the lung. The patient was a shop keeper having a small shop of general merchandise in the colder climate of Simla. On interrogation, he gave the history of keeping coal fire stove in the shop. While he used to warm the left hand over the coal fire, he would dispose off the customers with the right hand. Examination revealed a thin pale individual showing well defined reticular pigmentation over the palm of the left hand. Haemoglobin was 11.00 Gm. Skin Biopsy showed mild inflammatory reaction. Epidermis showed mild parakeratosis with a few polymorphonuclear cells in between the granular cell layer. Dermis showed cellular collections especially around the blood vessels and appendages. The picture was compatible with Erythema ab Igne.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This form of erythema is described by American and English authors, because of the excessive use of heat necessary for protection from the severity of cold. The climate of Simla being comparable, people use all types of heating measures to keep themselves warm in cold season. The condition therefore represents the role of ecology in the production of skin disease and the importance of regional Dermatoses.

Hartzell described this condition as reticulat eerythema which changes to purplish discolouration and subsequently passes on to permanent pigmentation. The disease is said to be common in cooks, stokers and other persons who expose the portion of body to the direct action of heat usually amongst persons whose health is below normal either as a result of previous illness, alcoholism or old age.

The commonest site described is the anterior surface of leg or front and side of chest. Although as a rule this condition is due to the direct action of heat from stoves, furnace but cases are recorded where this is produced by indirect heat like hot water bottle. Lehner and Kenedy (1922) have described 11 such cases under the title retiform skin changes of an inflammatory nature.

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DISCUSSION

The present case is being reported in an old man of 70 whose health was below normal being anaemic and was suffering from suspected malignancy of lung. This is compatible with the view of Hartzell. The inflammatory histopathological picture very much fitted into the diagnosis of Erythema ab-igne. The condition is not rare but the affection of palm is quite an uncommon site for this disease which commonly occurs on the front of the legs or chest. This is attributable to his occupation where he can afford to warm his left hand over the fire while he dispenses away the customers with his right hand.

SUMMARY


A case of Erythema ab Igne on the unusual site on the palm of left hand in an old man of 70 years of age is being reported from the colder climate of Simla as an interesting clinical oddity. This emphasizes the role of ecology in the production of skin diseases and the need for regional Dermatology.

REFERENCES

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