

Indian Journal of Dermatology, Venereology & Leprology

Journal indexed with SCI-E, PubMed, and EMBASE

Vol 74 | Issue 2 | Mar-Apr 2008

C O N T E N T S

EDITORIAL

Management of autoimmune urticaria

Arun C. Inamadar, Aparna Palit 89

VIEW POINT

Cosmetic dermatology versus cosmetology: A misnomer in need of urgent correction

Shyam B. Verma, Zoe D. Draelos 92

REVIEW ARTICLE

Psoriasiform dermatoses

Virendra N. Sehgal, Sunil Dogra, Govind Srivastava, Ashok K. Aggarwal 94



ORIGINAL ARTICLES

A study of allergen-specific IgE antibodies in Indian patients of atopic dermatitis

V. K. Somani 100

Chronic idiopathic urticaria: Comparison of clinical features with positive autologous serum skin test

George Mamatha, C. Balachandran, Prabhu Smitha 105



Autologous serum therapy in chronic urticaria: Old wine in a new bottle

A. K. Bajaj, Abir Saraswat, Amitabh Upadhyay, Rajetha Damisetty, Sandipan Dhar 109

Use of patch testing for identifying allergen causing chronic urticaria

Ashimav Deb Sharma 114

Vitiligoid lichen sclerosis: A reappraisal

Venkat Ratnam Attali, Sasi Kiran Attali 118



BRIEF REPORTS

Activated charcoal and baking soda to reduce odor associated with extensive blistering disorders

Arun Chakravarthi, C. R. Srinivas, Anil C. Mathew 122



Nevus of Ota: A series of 15 cases

Shanmuga Sekar, Maria Kuruvila, Harsha S. Pai 125



Premature ovarian failure due to cyclophosphamide: A report of four cases in dermatology practice

Vikrant A. Saoji 128

CASE REPORTS

Hand, foot and mouth disease in Nagpur

Vikrant A. Saoji 133



Non-familial multiple keratoacanthomas in a 70 year-old long-term non-progressor HIV-seropositive man

Hemanta Kumar Kar, Sunil T. Sabhnani, R. K. Gautam, P. K. Sharma, Kalpana Solanki, Meenakshi Bhardwaj 136



Late onset isotretinoin resistant acne conglobata in a patient with acromegaly

Kapil Jain, V. K. Jain, Kamal Aggarwal, Anu Bansal 139



Familial dyskeratotic comedones

M. Sendhil Kumaran, Divya Appachu, Elizabeth Jayaseelan 142



Nasal NK/T cell lymphoma presenting as a lethal midline granuloma

Vandana Mehta, C. Balachandran, Sudha Bhat, V. Geetha, Donald Fernandes



145

Childhood sclerodermatomyositis with generalized morphea

Girishkumar R. Ambade, Rachita S. Dhurat, Nitin Lade, Hemangi R. Jerajani.....



148

Subcutaneous panniculitis-like T-cell cutaneous lymphoma

Avninder Singh, Joginder Kumar, Sujala Kapur, V. Ramesh.....



151

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Using a submersible pump to clean large areas of the body with antiseptics

C. R. Srinivas



154

Peutz-Jeghers syndrome with prominent palmoplantar pigmentation

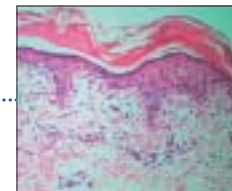
K. N. Shivaswamy, A. L. Shyamprasad, T. K. Sumathi, C. Ranganathan



154

Stratum corneum findings as clues to histological diagnosis of pityriasis lichenoides chronica

Rajiv Joshi



156

Author's reply

S. Pradeep Nair

157

Omalizumab in severe chronic urticaria

K. V. Godse.....

157

Hypothesis: The potential utility of topical eflornithine against cutaneous leishmaniasis

M. R. Namazi

158

Nodular melanoma in a skin graft site scar

A. Gnaneshwar Rao, Kamal K. Jhamnani, Chandana Konda



159

Palatal involvement in lepromatous leprosy

A. Gnaneshwar Rao, Chandana Konda, Kamal Jhamnani.....



161

Unilateral nevoid telangiectasia with no estrogen and progesterone receptors in a pediatric patient

F. Sule Afsar, Ragip Ortac, Gulden Diniz.....



163

Eruptive lichen planus in a child with celiac disease

Dipankar De, Amrinder J. Kanwar.....



164

Xerosis and pityriasis alba-like changes associated with zonisamide

Feroze Kaliyadan, Jayasree Manoj, S. Venkitakrishnan.....

165

Treatment of actinomycetoma with combination of rifampicin and co-trimoxazole

Rajiv Joshi.....



166

Author's reply

M. Ramam, Radhakrishna Bhat, Taru Garg, Vinod K. Sharma, R. Ray, M. K. Singh, U. Banerjee, C. Rajendran.....

168

Vitiligo, psoriasis and imiquimod: Fitting all into the same pathway

Bell Raj Eapen.....

169

Author's reply

Engin Şenel, Deniz Seçkin.....

169

Multiple dermatofibromas on face treated with carbon dioxide laser: The importance of laser parameters

Kabir Sardana, Vijay K. Garg.....

170

Author's reply

D. S. Krupa Shankar, A. Kushalappa, K. S. Uma, Anjay A. Pai.....

170

Alopecia areata progressing to totalis/universalis in non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (type II): Failure of dexamethasone-cyclophosphamide pulse therapy

Virendra N. Sehgal, Sambit N. Bhattacharya, Sonal Sharma, Govind Srivastava, Ashok K. Aggarwal.....



171

Subungual exostosis

Kamal Aggarwal, Sanjeev Gupta, Vijay Kumar Jain, Amit Mital, Sunita Gupta.....

173

Clinicohistopathological correlation of leprosy

Amrish N. Pandya, Hemali J. Tailor 174

RESIDENT'S PAGE

Dermatographism

Dipti Bhute, Bhavana Doshi, Sushil Pande, Sunanda Mahajan, Vidya Kharkar 177

FOCUS

Mycophenolate mofetil

Amar Surjushe, D. G. Saple 180

QUIZ

Multiple papules on the vulva

G. Raghu Rama Rao, R. Radha Rani, A. Amareswar, P. V. Krishnam
Raju, P. Raja Kumari, Y. Hari Kishan Kumar 185



E-IDVL

Net Study

Oral isotretinoin is as effective as a combination of oral isotretinoin and topical anti-acne agents in nodulocystic acne

Rajeev Dhir, Neetu P. Gehi, Reetu Agarwal, Yuvraj E. More 187

Net Case

Cutaneous diphtheria masquerading as a sexually transmitted disease

T. P. Vetrichevvel, Gajanan A. Pise, Kishan Kumar Agrawal,
Devinder Mohan Thappa 187



Net Letters

Patch test in Behcet's disease

Ülker Gül, Müzeyyen Gönül, Seray Külcü Çakmak, Arzu Kılıç 187

Cerebriform elephantiasis of the vulva following tuberculous lymphadenitis

Surajit Nayak, Basanti Acharjya, Basanti Devi, Satyadarshi Pattnaik,
Manoj Kumar Patra 188



Net Quiz

Vesicles on the tongue

Saurabh Agarwal, Krishna Gopal, Binay Kumar 188



Clinicohistopathological correlation of leprosy

Sir,

Leprosy is one of the major public health problems of the developing countries. The principle of reducing the load of infection in society, to break the chain of infection, is the cornerstone of leprosy control work today. Clinical judgment and skin smear examination is required for early diagnosis and adequate treatment to make the patient noninfectious. But in some early and borderline cases of leprosy, it is difficult to label only on clinical basis. So, histopathological examination is a must for confirmation of diagnosis in doubtful cases of leprosy. Moreover, correct labeling of paucibacillary and multibacillary cases is a prerequisite. No multibacillary case should be treated as paucibacillary case. So, clinicohistopathological correlation of leprosy cases assumes a pivotal role for early diagnosis and for proper labeling of a case.

Table 1: Clinical and histopathological correlation

Clinical types	No. of cases	Histopathological diagnosis							% of parity
		histoid	TT	BT	BB	BL	LL	IL	
TT	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	66.7
BT	15	-	-	8	1	-	-	6	53.3
BB	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0
BL	11	-	-	2	1	4	4	-	36.3
LL	6	-	-	-	-	1	5	-	83.3
IL	8	-	-	1	-	-	-	7	87.5
Histoid	5	3	-	-	1	-	1	-	60
Total	50	3	2	11	3	6	10	15	58

Fifty skin biopsies, of clinically suspected leprosy cases, were stained by Haematoxylin and Eosin and Ziehl Neelsen stain methods. The Ridley and Jopling classification was followed in both clinical and histopathological diagnoses. We also included indeterminate and histoid types of leprosy for analysis. The data pertaining to age, sex, clinical and histopathological classification of the type of leprosy were collected and analyzed. In analyzing the histopathology of a lesion, special attention was given to the following features, viz., invasion of the epidermis with or without erosion, involvement of the sub-epidermal zone, character and extent of granuloma, density of lymphocytic infiltrate, epithelioid cells and other cellular elements, nerve involvement and the presence of *M. leprae*.

Results of our study are mentioned in Table 1.

When *M. leprae* enters a person with sufficient cell-mediated immunity (CMI) against it, the bacilli will be destroyed. If the CMI is slightly impaired, some bacilli will multiply and a lesion will develop. Depending upon the degree of the immunity, more apparent clinical and histopathological features of the various types of leprosy may gradually develop. On histopathological study, the type of the granuloma cell serves to provide the spectrum of leprosy in two, with epithelioid cells extending from TT to BB and macrophages occurring in BL and LL.

Lymphocytes are the most numerous of all in BL, a few in BB and most scanty in LL. Erosion of epidermis by granuloma is often a valuable sign for the identification of TT. Infiltration of the subepidermal zone is almost invariable in TT, but inconstant in BT. This zone is almost clear, unless compressed by an expanding granuloma, in BB, BL and LL. In the present study, a complete parity between clinical type and histological type was noted in 58% cases [Table 1].

Ridley and Jopling in their study of 82 cases found complete agreement between clinical and histological types in 56 patients (68.3%).^[2] Kar *et al.* in their study observed total parity in 70%. They also observed highest parity in stable poles, i.e. TT (87.5%) and LL (71.4%), followed by IL (81.2%), BT (60.9%), BB (54.5%) and BL (53.8%).^[3] Kalla *et al.* in a study of 736 patients observed highest parity in LL and TT group (76.7% and 75.6%), respectively, followed by BT (44.2%), BL (43.7%) and BB (37.0%).^[4] Jerath and Desai in a study of 130 cases found complete agreement in 89 cases (68.5%). The figures for individual groups were TT (74.5%), BT (64.7%), BB (53.8%) and BL (28.5%), LL (61.5%) and indeterminate leprosy (88.8%).^[5] Considering the data of present study and other comparative studies, we can say that maximum disparity is seen in borderline cases. Parity in the polar group is maximum, because they are stable and showed a fixed histopathology, while borderline and indeterminate groups may have different histopathology in different site and lesion.

The clinicopathological picture is determined by the equilibrium between the agent and the host resistance. Skin has different pathophysiological subunits wherein there is some local modulation of the central host response as a result of which there are different grades of resistance and hence different clinicopathological responses in different areas. We conclude from our study that histopathological examination should be carried out in all cases of leprosy to arrive at a definite diagnosis of leprosy and to classify the type of the disease.

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