

PLICA NEUROPATHICA (Case Report)

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Summary

A case of Plica neuropathica is reported. This condition is uncommon and has so far not been reported from India.

Plica neuropathica is an uncommon condition affecting scalp hair and resulting in an irreversible tangling. The term plica neuropathica for this condition was first suggested by LePage in 1884¹, who attributed it to some strange nerve force. Over a dozen cases have so far been reported, one in a negro woman², but no such case report has appeared from India as per the available literature, though it is understood that such cases are seen once in a while.

Case report

A 30-year-old lady reported with an irreversibly tangled scalp hair. Soon after washing the scalp with an ordinary toilet soap, she wanted to comb her hair but failed to do so and found that her hair had matted into a compact solid mass one on either side of the parting line of scalp (Fig) that could neither be relieved manually nor with a comb even after softening the compact mass with oil. The hair mass was cut and the scalp was found healthy and without any evidence of infection or infestation. Examination of the mass revealed that except for

proximal and distal ends the whole hair had been irreversibly twisted. Hair pieces cut from the mass did not reveal any abnormality either macroscopically or microscopically.

Comments

Over a dozen cases that have so far been reported in the literature, five patients were hysteric², one had anxiety and depression², two had preceding fever^{3,4} and some reported the condition attributing it to the use of various shampoos^{5,6}. In four cases with severe hair matting, Bogaty and Dunlap⁷ proposed the condition to be due to "felting" rather than the causes noted above. Felting is a physical phenomenon well known in the wool and textile industry which creates compaction of fibres exposed to friction and compression in a liquid medium. The authors could experimentally produce such felting with human scalp hair and have suggested that over-vigorous mechanical manipulation especially of long curly hair is responsible for the observed matting.

In our case no precipitating factors were noted.

References

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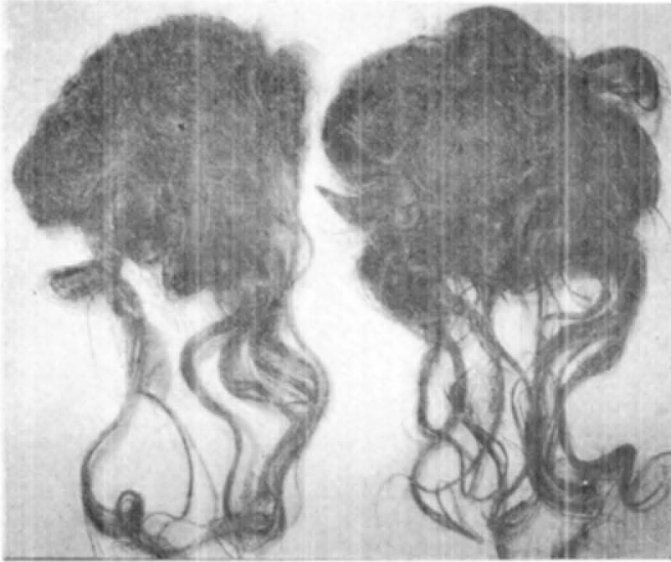


Fig. Solid mass of hair

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