

PREMATURE CANITIES AND PSORIASIS

Greying of the hairs beginning before the age of 20 in Caucasoids or before 30 in Negroids is often termed premature canities. It has been reported in association with vitiligo, hyperthyroidism, pernicious anemia and many hereditary syndromes like Brook's syndrome, progeria, Werner's syndrome, Rothmund's syndrome and dystrophia myotonia. Its association with certain organ-specific autoimmune processes suggests that greying may also be induced by an autoimmune mechanism. Psoriasis is a common dermatologic disorder, the aetiopathogenesis of which is still not well understood. More recently various immunologic mechanisms have been suggested in its pathogenesis. Localised form of psoriasis on the scalp may rarely cause alopecia. Other changes in the hair, described in psoriatics include dystrophy of the cuticle and small diameter of the shaft.

Frequent observation of premature greying of the scalp hairs in psoriatics made us to study this problem in detail. Two hundred patients (100 males and 100 females) with psoriasis, aged below 20 years were examined in detail. Fifty two (26%) of them were found to have

associated greying of scalp hairs, of varying intensity. In 20 of them greying was limited to the hairs within the plaques of psoriasis and in the remainder the hairs in between the plaques also were affected. There were no detectable causes of premature canities in these patients except for associated juvenile diabetes in 2 and hyperthyroidism in one. Another group of 200 patients with diseases other than psoriasis and aged below 20 years were examined as control. Only 2 of them were found to have premature canities. This study indicates that the incidence of premature canities is more in patients with psoriasis and their association is more than fortuitous. The exact mechanism of development of greying of hairs at an early age in these patients is not well understood. Various antipsoriatic topical medicaments cannot be attributed for the hair change because greying was present in majority (40) of patients even before the diagnosis of psoriasis was made for the first time.

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