

## HERPES ZOSTER IN MOTHER TRANSMITTING CHICKENPOX TO CHILDREN

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Transmission of varicella from a 32-year-old mother with herpes zoster to her 2 children aged 3 years and 5 years is reported.

**Key Words:** Herpes zoster, Varicella

### Introduction

Transmission of varicella infection from patients with herpes zoster is uncommon, though it was first noted by Von Bokay as early as in 1888<sup>1</sup> and has subsequently been reported by others.<sup>2</sup> The present case report highlights this uncommon mode of transmission.

### Case Reports

Two brothers aged 3 and 5 years presented with fever of 3 days duration and skin eruptions of 2 days duration. Their mother aged 32 years gave a history of painful, localised, unilateral vesicular eruption on trunk 3 weeks back. There was no history of similar eruptions in other family members, neighbourhood, or at school.

On examination, both boys had pleomorphic rash consisting of papules and vesiculopustular lesions on erythematous base distributed on face, trunk, back, and limbs. Clinically a diagnosis of chickenpox was made and confirmed on Tzanck smear which showed multinucleated giant cells and ballooning degeneration. Mother's

examination revealed grouped hyperpigmented macules in the distribution of T10 segment on right side confirming healed herpes zoster. Both boys were given symptomatic treatment and the lesions cleared in both in 8 and 10 days respectively.

### Comments

Varicella and herpes zoster are caused by varicella zoster virus (VZV). Varicella is highly contagious and is transmitted mainly by droplet infection from nasopharynx. The incubation period varies from 10 to 20 days. Herpes zoster usually represents reactivation of residual/latent infection of sensory neurons infected by viraemia of chickenpox. It is usually less infectious and transmission to others is not commonly seen. In the present case both brothers acquired varicella from their mother who had suffered from herpes zoster about 3 weeks back. This interval correlates with incubation period of varicella. Absence of any contact with varicella patient favours the assumed mode of transmission in our patients. The present case reports support the view that in the epidemiology of herpes zoster, droplet transfer of VZV from patient with herpes zoster is possible.<sup>3</sup>

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### References

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### OBITUARY



Dr. M A Wali (1930-1993)

We regret to inform the sad demise of our past President (1989), Dr M A Wali on 2nd February, 1993 while on his way back from the National Conference of IADVL at Manipal. He is survived by his wife and two sons.

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