

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

BLACK PIEDRA AFFECTING GREY HAIRS

A 70-year-old male whose hair had become completely grey, developed black, gritty nodules on the shaft of scalp hairs since 8 months. He attributed this to stopping of oiling of the scalp hair as per the instructions of an ayurvedic physician whom he had consulted for treatment of hypertension. Examination revealed numerous, stony-hard, gritty, adherent, black, tiny nodules and encrustations on the hair shafts (Fig. 1). Microscopic examination of the crushed nodules in 10% KOH revealed numerous asci. A diagnosis of black piedra was made



Fig. 1. Black piedra affecting the white grey hairs of the scalp.

and he was treated by cutting short the scalp hairs and by application of steam let out while cooking paddy in copper vessels—a native form of treatment of black piedra in this part.

Black piedra is not an uncommon fungal infection in this part of the country. The black nodules in the midst of white hairs on the scalp in our patient, stood very prominent. Though piedra can occur at any age, its incidence usually drops off after middle age.¹ Practice of oiling the hair has been credited both with fostering and preventing piedra. Moyer and Keeler reported a patient who purposely cultivated piedra in his hair to darken it, by refraining from using the oil on the hairs.² The development of piedra after stopping the practice of oiling the hairs, in our patient favours the common belief in India that oiling prevents piedra.

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References

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2. Moyer DG and Keeler C : Note on culture of black piedra for cosmetic reasons, *Arch Dermatol*, 1964; 89 : 436.