

HERPES ZOSTER IN A 9 - MONTH - OLD INFANT

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A case of herpes zoster in the distribution of left supraorbital branch of ophthalmic division of the trigeminal nerve, in a 9-month-old infant is reported for its rare occurrence in this age group.

Key Words : Herpes zoster, Varicella, Infant

Introduction

Herpes zoster is the result of reactivation of residual latent infection, usually of sensory neurons, following a primary varicella infection with varicella zoster virus. Zoster occurs sporadically without demographic, seasonal, gender, racial or occupational differences. It can occur at any age but is rare in infancy. We represent a case of herpes zoster in a 9-month-old infant whose mother gave no history of varicella during antenatal or postnatal period.

Case Report

A 9-month-old infant was seen for grouped vesicular lesions on left frontal region of the scalp of seven days duration. Examination revealed multiple vesicular lesions on an erythematous base distributed along the segment supplied by the supraorbital branch of the ophthalmic division of trigeminal nerve. There was tender retroauricular lymphadenopathy. Patient had no other con-

stitutional symptoms. He was not irritable and was feeding normally. One week later the lesions became crusted



Fig.1. Crusted lesions in the distribution of supraorbital branch of ophthalmic division of trigeminal nerve.

(Fig.1) and healed completely within about two weeks of the first visit. Tzanck smear from the lesions showed many multinucleated giant cells with ballooning degeneration, supplementing the clinical diagnosis of herpes zoster.

There was no history of varicella or herpes zoster in the infant's mother or any other family member during antenatal or postnatal period. However on detailed interrogation, patient's mother could recall a case of varicella in immediate neighbourhood during her second trimester of gestation.

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Discussion

Zoster occurs at an overall rate of 3.40 cases per 1000 persons. The lowest incidence is in individuals less than 10 years old (0.74/1000).¹ The earliest age reported is in a 3-month old infant.²

In infancy or childhood the disease generally results from reactivation of varicella zoster virus infection acquired either in utero or in early infancy while protected by maternal antibodies.³⁻⁵

Only a few cases of herpes zoster in infants have been reported in India,^{2,6,7} all of which have a documentation of maternal varicella during gestation suggesting that the initial exposure was in utero. In this case we presume that the exposure occurred in utero probably following a subclinical varicella infection in the mother.

References

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