

## Malignant syphilis



**Figure 1:** Multiple erythematous papules and plaques, some of them covered with a central necrotic eschar present on the trunk and bilaterally on the upper limbs



**Figure 2:** White rings of scales encircling a central erythematous crust (Bielt collarete)

A 29-year-old woman, a known case of HIV, presented with a three-week history of fever and mucocutaneous lesions. Cutaneous examination revealed generalized scattered erythematous papules, with a necrotic eschar [Figure 1] and peripheral Bielt collarete [Figure 2].

HIV viral load was 4.95 log and total CD4 lymphocyte count was 23 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>. Tests for syphilis showed a positive result for rapid plasma reagin test (titre of 1:16), *Treponema pallidum* hemagglutination assay and enzyme immunoassay test, consistent with the diagnosis of malignant syphilis. A single dose of intramuscular benzathine penicillin 2.4 million units was administered and the lesions resolved within a month with residual scars. A Jarisch-Herxheimer reaction occurred, which resolved with antipyretics. Our case fulfilled the Fisher's criteria except for the absence of high titre serologic test, due to prozone phenomenon.

### Declaration of patient consent

The patient's consent is not required as the patient's identity is not disclosed or compromised.

### Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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