

Diagnostic challenge in various cases of Cutaneous Tuberculosis over 5 years: An Indian perspective

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Introduction:

Extrapulmonary tuberculosis (EPTB) is a serious health problem in both developing and developed countries. In India, cutaneous TB constitutes about 0.1% to 2% of the total skin diseases attending outpatients. We were surprised to see many cases of tuberculosis with unusual presentations, which led to diagnostic dilemma.

Methods

All suspected cases of cutaneous tuberculosis were studied over a period of 5 years (2017-21) after taking their written consent. Thorough dermatological examinations and later skin biopsy, mantoux test, chest x-ray and other supporting tests were performed to confirm the diagnosis of tuberculosis. Their treatment outcome was also analysed.

Results:

A total of 88 patients were confirmed to have cutaneous tuberculosis. Females (58/88) were more compared to males. Lupus vulgaris (46/88) was most common presentation followed by Tuberculosis verrucosa cutis (TBVC). Lupus vulgaris had head and neck involvement in majority of the cases. Mantoux positivity was observed in 79.5% (70/88) of patients while raised ESR in 88.6% (78/88) of patients. Few cases of lupus vulgaris were very confusing and presented similar to deep fungal infections, hypertrophic lichen planus, mycetoma, subacute lupus cutaneous lupus erythematosus to name a few. other variants of EPTB also had very close differentials and were managed with Anti-tubercular therapy (ATT). 7 patients had serology positive for HIV. Histopathology was conclusive in 93.1% (82/88) cases. All the variants of cutaneous tuberculosis such as lupus vulgaris, scrofuloderma, and tuberculosis verrucosa cutis responded excellently to ATT.

Conclusion:

The present study emphasizes the importance of clinicopathological correlation and therapeutic response in cutaneous TB. Although positive results of ESR, Mantoux reactivity, and TB cultures facilitate the clinical diagnosis, negative results should not exclude the diagnosis of cutaneous TB. Also cutaneous Tuberculosis is a great mimicker in dermatology especially in a tropical country like India.