Tattoo Inoculated Lupus Vulgaris – Hazards of Body Arts

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Abstract

The most common form of cutaneous tuberculosis (TB) in India is lupus vulgaris. More youngsters are becoming the victims of cutaneous tuberculosis, AIDS, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, Syphilis cutaneous infections and eczemas by the way of tattooing and other body art methods like body painting, piercing, branding. In this case report, a 24-year old male patient, presented with well-defined erythematous scaly plaques of eight months duration over the one-year old tattoo on right forearm. The diagnosis of lupus vulgaris was made on clinical and histopathological grounds and anti-tubercular treatment was initiated. This case report creates awareness among clinicians about various hazards of body art.

Keywords: Lupus vulgaris; Tattoo; Body art

Case Presentation

A twenty-six-year-old male patient, presented with history of skin lesions of eight months duration at one year old tattoo site. Four months after tattooing, he noticed painless thickening with redness and minimal oozing at the site of tattoo which gradually progressed to painful reddish thickened lesion extending beyond the tattoo margin.

Cutaneous examination showed erythematous plaque of 10.3 x 5.2cm over the tattoo on the dorso-lateral aspect of right forearm with few areas of ulceration and crusted borders. Surface of the plaque was verrucous with minimal scaling. Margin was raised and hypertrophic (Figure 1). His systemic examination was unremarkable.

Possibilities of foreign body granuloma, tattoo inoculated lupus vulgaris, inoculated sarcoid and deep mycosis were considered.

The Mantoux test was negative. Hematological investigations were unremarkable except for an elevated erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR). Chest Xray was normal. Superficial scrapings from the ulcerated surface of the lesion were negative for fungus and AFB.

Biopsy was taken from the ulcerated area, in which epidermis showed keratinized stratified squamous epithelium with focal hyperplasia. Sub epithelium shows numerous ill-defined granulomas consists of lymphocytes, epithelioid cells, histiocytes and Langhans type of giant cells seen. No caseous necrosis seen. (Figure 2).
Body piercing is the practice of puncturing or cutting a part of the human body, creating an opening, in which jewelry or other decoration may be inserted. Body piercing has become a widespread fashion trend in Western industrialized nations. Though ear and nose piercing are commonly pierced sites among Indian females, even other body parts including lip, tongue, nipple, genital and navel are the other preferred sites for body piercing [9].

The complications common to all pierced sites include bacterial, viral and fungal infections. Also, hypertrophic scars, keloid and pyogenic granuloma are common [10]. There was an isolated case report of lupus vulgaris in a child secondary to ear piercing [11].

Branding refers to a traditional practice of creating ‘burns’ on the skin with a hot iron rod or metallic object with the intent of self-expression. There are various forms of branding including strike branding and others are hypothermal branding, chemical branding, electro cautery branding, and laser branding [8,12].

Therapeutic usage of branding in few medical conditions such as backache, sciatica, arthritis, paralysis, facial palsy, ascites, lymphadenopathy, jaundice, glaucoma, migraine headaches and sore throat is largely debatable [13].

Similar to present case, there are few isolated case reports of cutaneous tuberculosis that presented 4-12 months after tattooing wherein the patients developed multiple papules and plaques overlying and extending beyond the tattoo site [14].

### Conclusion

Body art practitioners and their clients are often unaware of the risks and complications especially invasive procedures associated with body art. Tattoo parlors should be educated about the risks involved and the importance of proper infection control procedures to be practiced.

Similarly, there is a need to increase awareness in the adolescents who are prone and interested for such body art procedures thereby preventing hazards of body art.

### References


