



ADVERSE DRUG REACTIONS, INCLUDING SJS, TEN

## IN PURSUIT OF FAIRNESS- TOPICAL STEROID ABUSE

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**Background:** The skin, being a visible organ, has a great psychosocial impact. The preference for a fairer looking skin in races which are pigmented has led to a boom in the cosmetic industry. The advertisements showing fairer people with better chances of success in their career, matrimonial alliances and a more fulfilled life have further fuelled this obsession. Indian skin is primarily Fitzpatrick's type IV- V but in an attempt to make it fairer, a wide variety of products, ranging from home remedies to over the counter combination medicated creams, are being used. The use of these combination creams which contain potent topical steroids has led to various unusual presentations of their side effects.

**Observation:** A 22 year female presented with wide stria all over her legs and axillae of 1 month duration. Her facial skin also had a topical steroid induced thinning and lightening. On probing she revealed that she had been using a potent topical steroid combination cream all over her legs and face for the last 2 months as she was planning to get married. Another young female patient presented with asymptomatic lightening and thinning of skin over the hands with visible telangiectasias after using a triple combination cream for skin lightening. Another patient presented with topical steroid induced rosacea along with tinea faciei after using a topical steroid cream for fairness.

**Key Message:** The indiscriminate use of topical steroids in various combination creams by the people in pursuit of a fairer skin is leading to an increasing number of patients presenting with various side effects. These side effects may at times be easily treatable like increased tendency to infections or a little refractory like rosacea or even irreversible like the cosmetically distressing wide stria in Patient 1.

