ALOPECIA IN AUTOIMMUNE BLISTERING DISEASES: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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Introduction: Alopecia is a complication of autoimmune blistering diseases (AIBD) that has generally been overlooked in patients with severe disease because it is regarded as a cosmetic issue. Recent quality of life tools have found that stigmatisation by appearance plays a significant psychological role in blistering diseases, but there is no consensus about the types or prevalence of alopecia found in these patients.

Objective: We therefore aimed to study the epidemiological and clinical presentations of alopecia in an existing cohort of AIBD patients.

Method: Forty-one patients with AIBD were assessed for clinical and trichoscopic signs of alopecia. We used a cross-sectional design to collect questionnaire and clinical data. All patients were recruited during regular bullous clinics or over the phone from an AIBD registry. The authors used a proforma to collate patient information including AIBD scalp involvement, trichoscopic findings and SALT II scores.

Results: Over 70% of patients had at least one type of alopecia, with 10% of patients presenting with a non-specific scarring alopecia. Whilst blistering scalp lesions were not predictive of alopecia in pemphigus vulgaris (PV) and bullous pemphigoid (BP) patients, elevated Dsg1 ratios were predictive of hair loss in PV (P<0.001) and increased alopecia was predictive of BP disease severity (P=0.001).

Conclusion: There is likelihood that one in 10 AIBD patients have a scarring alopecia that is related to their disease. This is the first study to include BP patients in alopecia prevalence, which was not elevated over background levels despite providing clues to disease severity.