



AUTOIMMUNE BULLOUS DISEASES

## DERMATITIS HERPETIFORMIS IN A SOUTHEAST ASIAN MAN: A CASE REPORT

*Fj Posadas Dy<sup>(1)</sup> - J Jamora<sup>(1)</sup> - R Blas<sup>(1)</sup>*

*St. Luke's Medical Center, Department Of Dermatology, Quezon City, Manila, Philippines<sup>(1)</sup>*

**Background:** Dermatitis Herpetiformis (DH) is an uncommon autoimmune blistering skin disease among Southeast Asians. Most published cases are on Caucasians of Northern European descent. DH usually manifests with intensely pruritic grouped papules and vesicles on the elbows, knees, and buttocks. Presence of excoriations, erosions and superimposed infections may change typical morphology and make diagnosis challenging. The first line of treatment is the combination of oral dapsone and a strict gluten free-diet.

**Observation:** We report a case of a 41-year old Southeast Asian male from the Philippines, with a chronic history of intensely pruritic grouped papules and vesicles over the ankles, lower back and elbows since childhood, often diagnosed and treated as a case of eczema or psoriasis. Initial biopsy done showed non specific findings on hematoxylin and eosin-staining. Direct immunofluorescence was negative. The patient's condition improved with oral antibiotics and a short course of combination antihistamine-steroid tablets. He remained asymptomatic for several years until the problem recurred, and patient returned for follow up. Repeat skin biopsy showed subepidermal splitting containing predominantly neutrophils with a dense perivascular neutrophilic infiltrate. Direct immunofluorescence was positive, showing granular deposition of IgA in the dermal papillary tips and C3 in the basement membrane zone, confirming the diagnosis of DH. He was treated with a combination of oral Dapsone at 100mg/day and strict gluten free diet, and patient responded well.

**Key Message:** To the best of our knowledge, there have been no published papers documenting DH in the Philippines prior to this case report. This is because DH patients of Southeast Asian descent will often not be suspected of having this disease. The importance of detailed clinical histories, physical exams, and skin biopsies sent for DIF are essential to the diagnosis and recognition of DH in this population.

