HAIR DISORDERS

A CASE OF ACQUIRED LOCALIZED PILI TORTI

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Background: Pili torti is a rare congenital or acquired disease of the hair shaft characterized by 0.4-0.9 mm wide 180º twists along the shaft's vertical axis at irregular intervals occurring in groups of 3 to 10 hairs. The twisted hair is fragile, which might result in alopecia particularly in areas of friction such as the occipital and temporal scalp. Pili torti may also be detected in the eyebrows, eyelashes, and axillary hair. Acquired pili torti are commonly seen in scarring alopecias, particularly lichen planopilaris and frontal fibrosing alopecia, where perifollicular fibrosis may be responsible for distortion of the follicle. A few pili torti can be seen in normal scalp and in association with other hair shaft disorders. Several congenital defects and syndromes including Björnstad (sensorineural deafness), Menkes (focal neural degeneration and growth retardation), Crandall syndrome (sensorineural deafness and hypogonadism), and trichothioystrophy (photosensitivity, ichthyosis, intellectual impairment, decreased fertility, and short stature) are characterized by pili torti and alopecia.

Observation: A healthy 5 year-old female presented with a 1-year history of two enlarging patches of abnormal hair on parietal scalp bilaterally. She had very long blond hair and the mother was concerned because the affected hairs tangled and were difficult to style. At clinical examination the hair of the affected areas was markedly different from the surrounding scalp, because of a spunglass and opaque appearance. There was no fragility or breakage. Trichoscopy confirmed pili torti, whereas examination of the remainder of the scalp displayed normal hair shafts. The patient's two brothers had normal hair and the patient did not display symptoms of hearing impairment, mental or growth retardation, or ichthyosis.

Key message: Pili torti may be a localized finding instead of a condition affecting the entire scalp.