



INFECTIOUS DISEASES (BACTERIAL, FUNGAL, VIRAL, PARASITIC, INFESTATIONS)

SCROFULODERMA ARISING FROM TUBERCULOSIS OF THE RIBS IN A 14-YEAR OLD FILIPINO MALE

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Background: Scrofuloderma, also known as tuberculosis colliquativa cutis, is a rare manifestation of extrapulmonary tuberculosis (TB). Although it is the most common form of cutaneous TB, scrofuloderma arising from the ribs is extremely rare.

Observation: This is a case of a 14-year old boy with a two-year history of painless and non-bloody wounds on the torso that started as nodules and later formed ulcers and scars. Various antibiotics failed to attain cure. He had no primary TB. Examination exposed the multiple, circumscribed, and irregularly shaped ulcers with a beefy red base and with some showing raised borders and suppuration. The lesions were spread on the anterior and posterior trunk and the left lateral thorax and appeared to follow rib curvature. X-rays of the thoracic cage and spine revealed multiple osteolytic lesions confined to the ribs with overlying ulcers, and dextroscoliosis. Chest x-ray showed pulmonary TB. Ulcer biopsy exhibited granulomatous inflammation; AFB stain was negative. PPD test was positive. After a year of anti-TB treatment, the ulcers completely healed and formed atrophic scars. A repeat x-ray of the thoracic cage and spine revealed re-ossification and new bone formation in areas with prior rib erosions and lytic changes; new lytic lesions were absent. These findings are consistent with resolving disease.

Key message: Scrofuloderma arising from TB of the ribs is extremely rare. This condition should be suspected in a resident of a high TB-burden country. Early diagnosis and treatment may prevent disability. Household contacts of the index case should be screened for TB to prevent disease transmission.

