PSYCHODERMATOLOGY

AUTOERYTHROCYTE SENSITIZATION SYNDROME: A SERIES OF FOUR CASES

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Background: Autoerythrocyte sensitization syndrome (ASS), also known as Gardner Diamond syndrome (GDS), is a rare disorder that is characterized by painful and spontaneous ecchymoses commonly affecting adult women and mostly associated with psychiatric illness. Though exact cause remains unknown, it is regarded as an autoimmune vasculopathy with sensitization
to phosphatidylserine, a component of erythrocyte stroma. Diagnosis is mainly based on clinical presentation, exclusion of other simulating diseases, and psychiatric evaluation. To date, only few cases have been reported.

Observations: We report four cases of GDS. There were three young women aged respectively 24, 27 and 29 years and a 5 year old girl. There was no personal or family history of bleeding disorders in all patients. Duration of the complaints ranged from 5 months to 7 years, with an average of 2.56 years among our patients. No prodrome symptoms has been described, except for one patient who complained of associated headache. None of the patients had a history of trauma or recent drug intake. However, the initiation of the lesions coincided with family conflicts in one case and with surgery in two cases. On examination, there were multiple, well-defined, irregularly shaped tender ecchymosis in all patients. The ecchymoses were situated on the upper and lower limbs in the four patients, and involved other areas of the body in one case. Two patients had low self-esteem, academic decline and poor interpersonal relationships. All had associated underlying psychiatric illness. Psychiatric evaluation revealed anxiety in two patients and depression in the other two cases. Autoerythrocyte sensitization test was negative in one case which does not eliminate the diagnosis of GDS.

Key message: Patients presenting with painful bruises without history of underlying bleeding disorder or drug history or history of trauma should be considered for ASS, and managed accordingly.