



PSYCHODERMATOLOGY

DERMATITIS ARTEFACTA; THE CHALLENGE TO DERMATOLOGISTS A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY OF 35 PATIENTS, & REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION: Dermatitis artefacta is a self- injurious behavior produced or perpetuated by the patient's own actions. The underlying motive is to assume a sick role, & patients are usually not consciously aware of this psychological need.

It can be difficult to diagnose as the patients initially deny any relation to 'self-infliction'. The situation is further complicated by the diversity of methods used by patients to self-harm and the ingenuity they employ in doing so.

OBJECTIVE: To bring this important condition to the awareness of physicians for better understanding, proper management & to spare the patient unnecessary investigations often done to exclude organic causes.

MATERIALS & METHODS: A descriptive cross sectional retrospective study was conducted on 35 patients attending the dermatology department in Nassirya teaching hospital from July 2015 till December 2017, studying the various presentations, sites of affection, age, sex together with social & psychological background of patients.

RESULTS: Out of 35 patients recruited, the majority were females, in one third of patients the sites most frequently affected were the hands & forearms, 40% of the cases were children aged ≤ 16 years, nearly 63% of patients presented with a chronic problem ≥ 2 months, in most of the patients there was no personal or family history of any psychological problem.

CONCLUSION: Dermatitis artefacta is an important, not uncommon condition which is still a cause of deceit to many physicians & dermatologists. A lot of unnecessary, expensive investigations & systemic work up done to reach the diagnosis, which is a burden for the patient & his family.

