



SKIN MANIFESTATIONS OF INTERNAL DISEASE

## ACANTHOSIS NIGRICANS MALIGNA AS THE CLUE TO THE DIAGNOSIS OF AN ENDOCERVICAL ADENOCARCINOMA

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**Background:** Acanthosis nigricans (AN) is clinically characterized by symmetric, hyperpigmented, velvety or verrucous plaques in intertriginous areas. It is a cutaneous manifestation of internal disease, most often associated with benign conditions (80%), like obesity, insulin resistance and diabetes. Less frequently AN represents a paraneoplastic dermatosis, called AN maligna (ANM), which is in most cases associated with abdominal malignancies, especially adenocarcinomas, like gastric cancer. It generally affects adults over 40 years old and has a rapid onset. ANM can occur simultaneously or after the malignancy diagnosis, but can also precede it and be a diagnostic clue.

**Observation:** A 69-year-old female presented with a 1-year history of velvety, greyish-brown plaques on the neck, axillae and perineum, and progressively numerous seborrheic keratoses in the neck, trunk, limbs and eyelids, causing bothersome ptosis. The patient also reported a sensation of dry palms and mouth. She had a known history of obesity and well-controlled type 2 diabetes, and denied constitutional, gastrointestinal, genitourinary and respiratory symptoms. Dermatologic examination confirmed AN and revealed the presence of “tripe palms”. The patient’s metabolic disorders alone could not explain such a florid clinical picture, so an occult neoplasm was suspected. Laboratory tests showed elevated levels of tumor markers (beta-2 microglobulin and CA-125). Upper gastrointestinal endoscopy, colonoscopy, mammogram and breast ultrasound showed no significant findings. A cervico-thoraco-abdominopelvic CT scan showed an enlarged uterus, and further gynecologic examination revealed a large solid tumor in the cervix. Histopathological examination confirmed the diagnosis of an invasive endocervical adenocarcinoma.

**Key message:** We present a rare clinical observation, as only few cases of ANM in association with gynecologic tumors – including ovarian, endometrial and cervical cancers – have been previously reported. This case is also a reminder of how the recognition of particular skin findings and a thorough clinical investigation can lead to the diagnosis of internal malignancies.

