



SKIN MANIFESTATIONS OF INTERNAL DISEASE

PELLAGRA: A FORGOTTEN DISEASE.

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Background: Pellagra is a nutritional disease due to deficiency of the B vitamin niacin. Clinically known as the 4 “D” symptoms for dermatitis, diarrhea, dementia, and even death. Skin changes remain one of the most important features of this pathology. Herein we describe a case of pellagra in an elderly female patient.

Observation: A 62-year-old woman presented to us with a 4-year history of recurrent erythema of the sun exposed areas associated with loss of appetite and undetermined weight loss. Clinical examination showed a scaly erythematous eruption symmetrically involving the dorsa of the hands, the forearms, and the dorsa of feet with blisters over her face and the upper surface of the feet. Skin lesions were well defined, limited to sun-exposed sites. The patient described also apathy with depressed mood and episodes of watery diarrhea. There were no history of drug intake, alcohol use, but poor diet was reported. According to the association of dermatologic, digestive, and psychiatric disorders in the patient, as well as colonoscopy were normal. Serology of celiac disease was also negative. Parenteral supplementation with niacin has resulted in a quick response of dermatological, digestive and psychiatric symptoms.

Key message: Pellagra is still endemic in poor underdeveloped nations. In our country, pellagra is rarely reported; most cases are associated with secondary diseases. In our patient, the malnutrition was the cause of pellagra. The correct diagnosis was established after four years of repeated exacerbation of photosensitivity syndrome following re-exposure to sunlight. Owing that, we emphasize the importance of prompt diagnosis to prevent the development of long-term sequelae of this disease.

