



TROPICAL DERMATOLOGY

LEPROSY IN A SCENARIO OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: BRAZILIAN PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEMS

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BACKGROUND: Leprosy is a contagious and neglected disease associated with discrimination, stigma and in some cases even linked to physical abuse. One-third of women worldwide will experience physical or sexual abuse during their lifetime. For the ones affected by leprosy this data remains even higher, usually covered and protected by fear, shame, cultural beliefs and social stigma.

OBSERVATION: A 44-year-old female patient from the Brazilian northeast was referred to our service after noticing an anesthesia area during a trauma caused by her husband in a domestic violence. In dermatologic examination it was observed an erythematous hypochromic area with loss of tactile, thermal and painful sensitivity in her right elbow. Histopathology exhibit perianexal, perineural and perivascular lymphohistiocytic infiltrate in the dermis. Based on dermatological examination and histopathology, findings were compatible with indeterminate leprosy. The patient was followed by a multidisciplinary team during all treatment and after that, composed by psychologist, social assistant, nurse, physician and physiotherapist. The patient showed improvement of the cutaneous lesion after 6 months of multi-drug therapy for paucibacillary leprosy, with no signs of neurological impairment.

KEY MESSAGE: Both violence against women and leprosy are important public health problems in Brazil, the former leading in this case to the discovery of the latter through the perception of anesthesia area during the physical trauma. The multiprofessional health team is essential in assisting and protecting the patient in vulnerability situations. In addition, it's also highlighted the importance of the role of the dermatologist in identifying clinical signals that may denote physical violence, since it may be the first healthcare to identify the domestic violence and it's not usually part of everyday general practice.

