

Alopecia syphilitica

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Abstract

Alopecia syphilitica is a less common manifestation of secondary syphilis. It could present with other mucocutaneous symptoms of secondary syphilis or rarely present as the only symptom of secondary syphilis, the so-called “essential syphilitic alopecia.” Herein, we present a case of essential syphilitic alopecia to remind physicians, especially for sexually active patients.

Key words: Alopecia, alopecia syphilitica, secondary syphilis

A 33-year-old male presented with hair loss for about 6 weeks. On physical examination, the skin of scalp is normal. Diffuse thinning of the hair on the right temporal scalp [Figure 1] and several small, patches of hair loss, compatible with “moth-eaten” alopecia, on the left temporal scalp [Figure 2] were noted. Laboratory evaluation revealed increased titers for rapid plasma reagin (RPR) test of 1:128 and *Treponema*

pallidum particle agglutination assay test of >1:20480. The diagnosis of alopecia syphilitica was made and he was treated with single intramuscular injections of benzathine penicillin (2.4 million units). Two months later, RPR test decreased to 1:8 and alopecia improved. Alopecia syphilitica is a less common manifestation of secondary syphilis. It could present with other mucocutaneous symptoms of secondary syphilis or



Figure 1: Diffuse thinning of the hair on the right temporal scalp



Figure 2: Several small, patches of hair loss, compatible with “moth-eaten” alopecia, on the left temporal scalp

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rarely present as the only symptom of secondary syphilis, the so-called “essential syphilitic alopecia.” The latter is easily misdiagnosed. Physicians should keep the diagnosis of alopecia syphilitica in mind, especially in a sexually active patient.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.