

Dermatomyositis: It is Not Always an Allergic Reaction

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Abstract : Dermatomyositis is an idiopathic inflammatory myopathy, traditionally characterized by a progressive, symmetrical proximal muscle weakness and pathognomonic or characteristic cutaneous manifestations. We report a case of a 60-year old Chinese female who was referred from polyclinic for allergic rash over the body after applying hair dye 3 weeks ago. It was associated with puffiness of face, shortness of breath and hoarse voice since last 2 weeks with decrease effort tolerance. She also complained of dysphagia/ myalgia with progressive weakness of proximal muscles and palpitations. She denied chest pain, loss of appetite, weight loss, orthopnea or fever. She had stable vital signs and appeared cushingoid. She was noted to have rash over the scalp/ face and ecchymosis over the right arm with puffiness of face and periorbital oedema. There was symmetrical muscle weakness and other neurological examination was normal. Initial impression was of allergic reaction and underlying nephrotic syndrome and Cushing's syndrome from TCM use. Diagnostic tests showed high Creatinine kinase (CK) of 1463 u/l, CK-MB of 18.7 ug/l and Troponin -T of 0.09 ug/l. The Full blood count and renal panel was normal. EMG showed inflammatory myositis. Patient was managed by rheumatologist and discharged on oral prednisolone with methotrexate/ ergocalciferol capsule and calcium carb, vitamin D tablets and outpatient follow up. In some patients, cutaneous disease exists in the absence of objective evidence of muscle inflammation. Management of dermatomyositis begins with careful investigation for the presence of muscle disease or of additional systemic involvement, particularly of the pulmonary, cardiac or gastrointestinal systems, and for the possibility of an accompanying malignancy. Muscle disease and systemic involvement can be refractory and may require multiple sequential therapeutic interventions or, at times, combinations of therapies. Thus, we want to highlight to the physicians that the cutaneous disease of dermatomyositis should not be confused with allergic reaction. It can be particularly challenging to diagnose. Early recognition aids appropriate management of this group of patients.

Keywords : dermatomyositis, myopathy, allergy, cutaneous disease

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