

Short Communication

Cutaneous horn of scalp

Sir, cutaneous horn (cornu cutaneum) is a relatively rare protruded lesion from the skin resembling the horn of an animal. This lesion may be associated with a benign, premalignant, or malignant lesion at its base.

A 68-year-old male, farmer by profession, reported with a swelling of scalp over the left frontal area of more than 10 years duration. The lesion had been growing gradually and the patient was prompted to consult after listening to a radio-talk regarding cancer. The patient did not have any other co morbidity and in the past (about 40 years back) had suffered from burns which had left hypopigmented scars over the scalp. On examination, there was a hard horn-like lesion over a hypopigmented left frontoparietal area, measuring 3 cms x 3.5 cms x 2.5 cms high (**Figure 1**). The horn had shallow furrows running along whole of the length. The lesion was excised in toto and histopathological examination revealed a cutaneous horn with compact hyperkeratosis and tricholemmal keratinized debris. There was no evidence of any premalignant or malignant changes in the base of the lesion. The patient did not develop any recurrence upto 15 months follow up.

Discussion

Cutaneous horn (cornu cutaneum) is a relatively rare nodular skin lesion and comprises of keratinized material organised in the shape of an animal horn.¹ Cutaneous horns usually arise on sun-exposed skin but can occur even in sun-protected areas and in any part of the body. This term 'cutaneous horn' is applied to lesions in which the height of the keratotic mass amounts to at least half of its diameter.²



Figure 1 Cutaneous horn of scalp.

The cutaneous horns are only morphologically similar to animal horns but are histologically quite different from them. The animal horns are composed of superficial hyperkeratotic epidermis, dermis, and centrally positioned bone. No such axially positioned well-formed bone has been observed in the human horns.³

Cutaneous horn is believed to result from unusual cohesiveness of keratinized material from the superficial layers of the skin (stratum corneum) or implanted deeply in the cutis.⁴ The base of the horn may be flat, nodular, or crateriform and number of skin lesions can be found at the base of the cutaneous horn. Over 60% of the lesions are benign,⁵ however, malignant or premalignant lesions might be associated in upto 20-40% of case.⁶ The benign skin conditions associated with cutaneous horns^{7,8} include solar keratosis, angioma, angiokeratoma, cutaneous leishmaniasis, lichenoid keratosis, epidermal nevi, epidermal acanthoma, seborrheic

keratosis, sebaceous adenoma, trichilemmoma, sebaceous molluscum and verruca vulgaris. Similarly the premalignant and malignant conditions associated with the horns^{7,8} include adenoacanthoma, actinic keratosis, Bowen's disease, arsenical keratosis, Paget's disease, Kaposi sarcoma, malignant melanoma, sebaceous carcinoma⁹ and squamous cell carcinoma. No clinical features reliably distinguish between benign and malignant lesions. However, tenderness at the base and lesions of larger size should raise suspicion of malignancy.⁸

Treatment is surgical and comprises of excision of the lesion and histopathological analysis of the base to rule out malignancy.⁶

References

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