

Dermatological Quiz

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Fig 2: Skin lesion at left nipple

A 70-year-old man with good past health complained of non-itchy skin lesion around his left nipple for one year (Figure). The skin lesion only affected his left nipple and progressively enlarged in size. He has tried various topical steroids and antifungal creams with no improvement.

Questions:

1. What is your provisional diagnosis or differential diagnoses?
2. What other important physical examination you would like to perform?
3. How will you manage this patient?

Answer to Dermatological Quiz

Answer:

1. The elderly patient suffered from Paget's disease of breast. The well defined erythematous scaly infiltrative plaque with irregular border extending asymmetrically from the left nipple and areola area is suggestive of the malignant skin disease. Other differential diagnoses may include Bowen's disease or superficial basal cell carcinoma affecting the nipple.
2. Careful examination of both breasts and the regional lymph nodes are essential when suspecting Paget's disease affecting the breast. Underlying breast cancer, usually ductal in situ or invasive carcinoma, is reported in 92-100% of mammary Paget's disease. Among these patients, 30-50% present with clinically palpable nodule adhering to areola or more distant in the breast and are often multifocal.
3. Skin biopsy of the plaque confirms the diagnosis of Paget's disease which shows the presence of characteristic pagetoid cells, with abundant clear cytoplasm and large hyperchromatic variably atypical nuclei, arranged singly or in nests, or in all levels of epidermis (pagetoid pattern). They may form small glandular structures. The patient should be urgently referred to a breast surgeon for appropriate surgical removal of the lesion by modified radical mastectomy with lymph node excision, or wide conic excision of nipple/areola, or total mastectomy as indicated. Adjunctive radiotherapy or chemotherapy such as tamoxifen may be considered, especially in premenopausal female patients with lymph node metastasis.

Mammary Paget's disease affecting male patients as seen in this patient is relatively rare. The mean age of onset is 61.5 years. Although the disease is clinically and pathologically similar to that of females, there is a shorter delay between onset of disease and surgical treatment. The overall five year survival rate for female and male patients are 30-50% and 20-30% respectively.

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