Case of the Month

Diagnosis: Recurrent Group A Streptococcus Infection With Vasculitis

TORONTO — The differential diagnosis included leukocytoclastic vasculitis, but that condition is rare, with no clear reports in the literature. Polyarteritis nodosa was also considered, although this patient did not have the painful, tender nodules that are often associated with this condition.

The cutaneous form of polyarteritis nodosa (cPAN) primarily affects the skin without systemic involvement such as vasculitis. Microscopic PAN (mPAN), in contrast, often affects small arteries and veins and can feature lung and kidney involvement. "These are different conditions, but they may be part of a spectrum—from mPAN to PAN," Dr. Miriam Weinstein said at the annual conference of the Canadian Dermatology Association.

A skin biopsy in this case indicated neutrophilic vasculitis with inflammation.

"Group A strep was cultured from his throat when I saw him on the tenth eruption," Dr. Weinstein said. His throat swab findings were negative between episodes.

Can group A strep be seen with vasculitis? "The answer is 'yes'," said Dr.Weinstein, medical director of the pediatric dermatology fellowship program at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

Of the different PAN subtypes, cPAN is the only one consistently linked with group A streptococci infection in the literature (Int. J. Dermatol. 1998;37:664-6; Arch. Dis. Child. 1996;74:367; and Ann. Rheum. Dis. 1995;54:134-6).

Determination of the precise diagnosis was challenging. "He had a recurrent strep infection. This case involved urticarial eruption, which is uncommon with strep. He also had some features consistent with mPAN … vasculitis of small to medium arteries," Dr. Weinstein said.

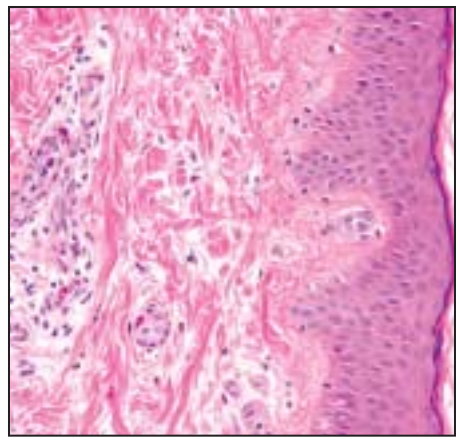
The final diagnosis was group A β-hemolytic streptococci–induced mPAN with urticarial lesions.

Recurrent strep infections also can affect younger children, although the presentation can differ. "If you see persistent erythematous folds, particularly in infants and babies, think group A strep and swab," she suggested.

Group A strep infection is often mistaken for *Candida*, irritant contact dermatitis, or seborrheic dermatitis. It is often treated but persists, Dr. Weinstein said. Frequently there is an odor with group A strep infection that is not present with *Candida*. "Don't forget perianal strep. It is more common than reported and often missed," she said. This usually affects patients younger than 10 years. If asked, these kids will have a history of painful bowel movements and perianal itch. "Often the parents don't know about this. It is the first time it's asked," she noted.

Both *Candida* and group A strep can induce psoriasis. Psoriasiform infectious disease features widespread, acute, well-demarcated, and erythematous plaques with scale. "There are no reports of this in the literature, but many pediatric dermatologists see this," Dr. Weinstein said.

—Damian McNamara



COURTESY DR. MIRIAM WEINSTEIN

The child had an occurrence of urticarial eruptions, which is uncommon with strep.

FYI

Seal for Recommended Sunscreens

The American Academy of Dermatology has a new "Seal of Recognition" for topical sun-protection products meeting its criteria: sun protection factor 15 or higher, UVA/UVB protection, water resistance, test-proven lack of phototoxicity, and compliance with the FDA Sunscreen Monograph. For information, visit www.aad.org.

Major-League Screening Campaign

The American Academy of Dermatology has again partnered with Major League Baseball for its "Play Smart When It Comes to the Sun" campaign. Volunteer dermatologists screen players, coaches, and staff members. To date, 570 suspicious lesions have been detected, including 50 suspected melanomas. For more information, visit www.playsmartsun.org.

Skin Cancer Info for Seniors

The National Institute of Health's SeniorHealth Web site has added information on skin cancer. Seniors can research causes, risks, screening, diagnosis, and treatments. The Web site includes a page on frequently asked questions. For more information, visit www.nihseniorhealth.gov.