

TRANSMITTED PHYTOPHOTODERMATITIS SIMULATING CHILD ABUSE

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INTRODUCTION

Phytophotodermatitis (PPD) is defined as a phototoxic reaction of the skin after contact with substances derived from plants and subsequent ultraviolet exposure. In Brazil, PPD is typically caused by the contact with Tahitian lemon juice. Its presentation includes erythematous rash, sometimes with blistering, evolving to hyperpigmentation. However, it can vary widely depending on method of contact, length of exposure and quantity of photosensitising agent, often leading to misdiagnosis and confusion with child abuse and other conditions.

CASE DESCRIPTION

14-month-old child presented irregularly shaped erythematous lesions and mild erythema on the back, similar to battering. The anamnesis revealed that the child's father had handled lemons on the beach and after, he put the child on his lap. The case resolved with progressive reduction of hyperpigmentation.



Image 1: Irregularly shaped erythematous lesions

DISCUSSION

In PPD, skin lesions are commonly asymmetrically distributed and oddly shaped. Many cases of irregularly shaped and well-demarcated patches of hyperpigmentation resembling handprints or fingertips have been described, thus leading to confusion with child abuse. History and physical examination are required to differentiate these conditions. Although PPD has pigmentary changes that simulate abuse, the color usually evolves to post-inflammatory brown, unlike bruises.

CONCLUSION

Clinicians and dermatologists should be aware of this possibility and asking the parents if there had been any contact with phototoxic plants may help with differential diagnosis and recognition of PPD.

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