Becker's Naevus Occurring at Birth and in Early Childhood

Sir,

Becker's naevus is a variant of epidermal naevus characterized by a single, hyperpigmented macule with increased hair growth on the shoulder, chest or scapular regions, but any other area can be involved (1). It is most common in men and classically observed during adolescence, but can be seen from birth and can also be familial. Histopathologically, there may be mild acanthosis and papillomatosis with increased pigment in the basal cell layer and a variable increase in dermal smooth muscle fibres. There are no naevus cells in the dermis. We report five cases of Becker's naevus which presented either at birth or prepubescent age at unusual sites.

CASE REPORTS

Case 1

An 8-year-old girl presented with an asymptomatic dark brown macule on the lower back since birth. As she grew older there was a gradual increase in the size of the lesion with coarse lesional hairs. Cutaneous examination showed a dark brown macule with coarse hair and irregular edge in the right lumbar region and satellite macules along the left groin and thigh. The examination of other systems was normal. The skin biopsy from the lesion revealed mild acanthosis and papillomatosis with increased pigment in the basal cell layer.

Case 2

A 13-year-old girl had had a brown macule on the face since the age of 1 year. The lesion started increasing in size, became darker in colour and coarse hairs appeared after 2 years. Cutaneous examination revealed a well-defined dark brown macule with coarse hairs on the right cheek (Fig. 1). There was no associated cutaneous or systemic abnormalities. The skin biopsy from the lesion showed an unremarkable epidermis and a few melanophages.

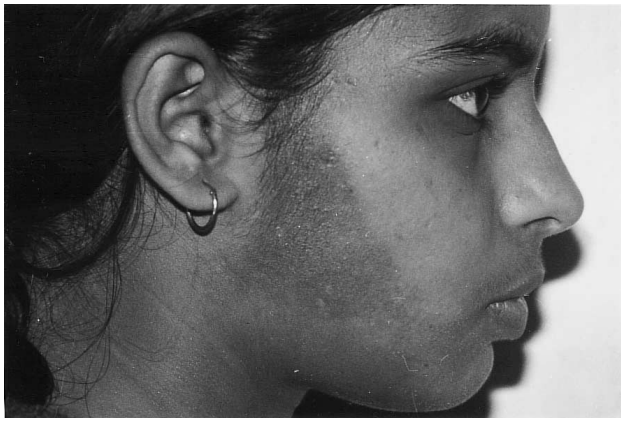

Fig. 1. Light brown macule with a few coarse hairs over the right cheek.

Case 3

An 11-year-old girl had an asymptomatic brown macule on the left hand for 5 years. Cutaneous examination revealed a well-defined light brown macule with irregular margins and peripheral satellite lesions on the dorsum of the left hand extending up to the wrist. There were no coarse or increased lesional hairs. Systemic examination was normal. The skin biopsy from the lesion was unremarkable, except for an increased pigment in the basal cell layer.

Case 4

A 10-year-old sister of the above patient (case 3) noticed an asymptomatic macule on the left cheek 1 month ago. Examination revealed a well-defined, light brown macule with irregular margins on the left cheek. There were no coarse hairs in the lesion and no other lesions. Examination of the other systems was normal. The histopathological examination in this case also revealed only increased pigment in the basal layer.

Case 5

An 18-year-old boy had a dark brown asymptomatic macule with dark coarse hairs on the right cheek. He had noticed this lesion when he was 8 years old. At the age of 12 years he noticed a gradual darkening of the lesion with increased growth of hairs on the surface as compared to the surrounding skin. The histopathological examination revealed mild acanthosis with increased pigment in the basal layer.

DISCUSSION

Some authors believe that congenital Becker's naevi described in the literature may be congenital smooth muscle hamartomas (CSMH) (2). CSMH may also present at birth as a pigmented lesion with increased growth of the overlying hair. The presence of smooth muscle bundles in the dermis is characteristic of CSMH, although a similar change may also be seen in Becker's naevus (3). The absence of smooth muscle bundles in the presence of other epidermal changes suggests a diagnosis of Becker's naevus in a congenital hyperpigmented and hypertrichotic lesion.

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