

TRICHOSPOROSIS (WHITE PIEDRA)

A Case Report from Finland

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Abstract. A 25-year-old Finnish male had had brownish-black nodules along the shafts of his scrotal hair for a period of 1½ years. From the clinical appearance, piedra was suspected. Fungal culture demonstrated *Trichosporum cutanum* (T. Beigelii) and a diagnosis of white piedra was made. The patient has never been outside the boundaries of Finland.

Key words: Dermatomycosis; Trichosporosis; White piedra

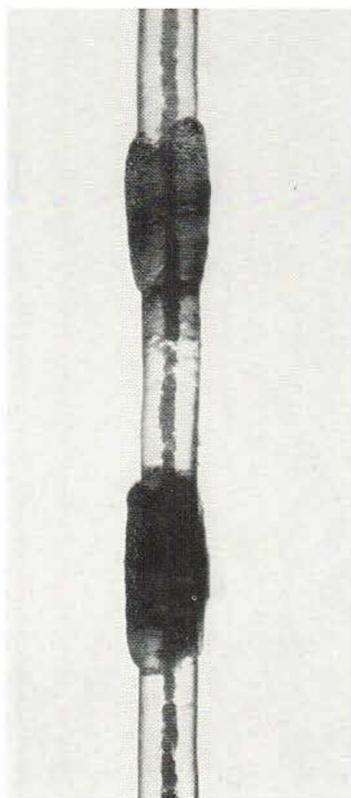
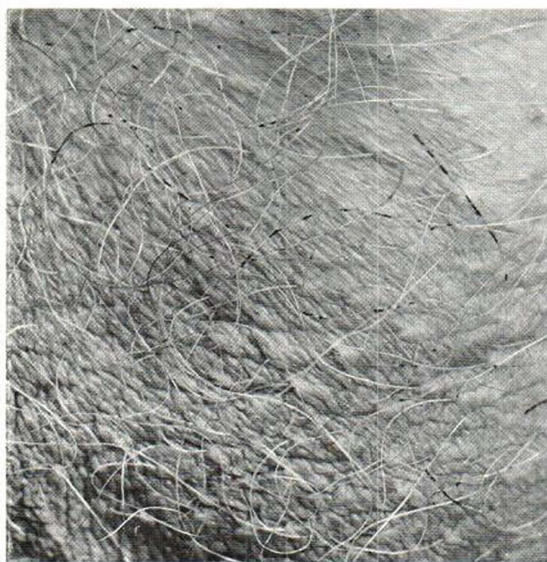
Piedra is a Spanish word and means a stone. It is a fungal disease in which small, hard nodules are formed along the hair shafts. It is caused by two different fungi, *Trichosporum cutanum* (T. beigelii)—white piedra—and *Piedraia hortae*—black piedra.

White piedra was first described by Beigel in London in 1865 (1). White piedra is more sporadic in occurrence and less frequent than black piedra.

It has been found in Asia, South America, Europe and the United States (2, 3, 4, 5).

CASE REPORT

In September 1972, a 23-year-old Finnish male noticed black nodules along the shafts of his scrotal hair. He shaved the affected hair once, but after some time the nodules reappeared. After that, he treated his pubic hair with dioxanthogen, because he thought that the nodular concretions were the nits of the pubic louse. The treatment failed again.



Figs. 1 and 2. Nodules of white piedra on the scrotal hair.

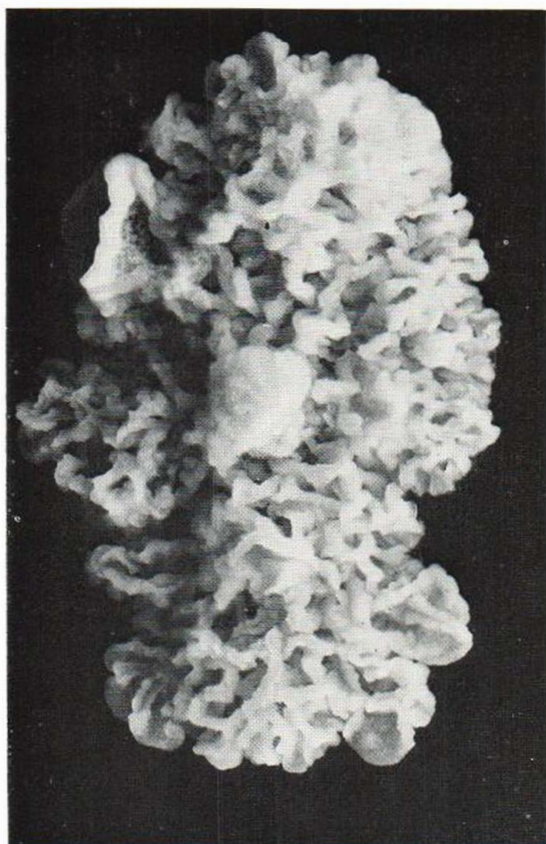
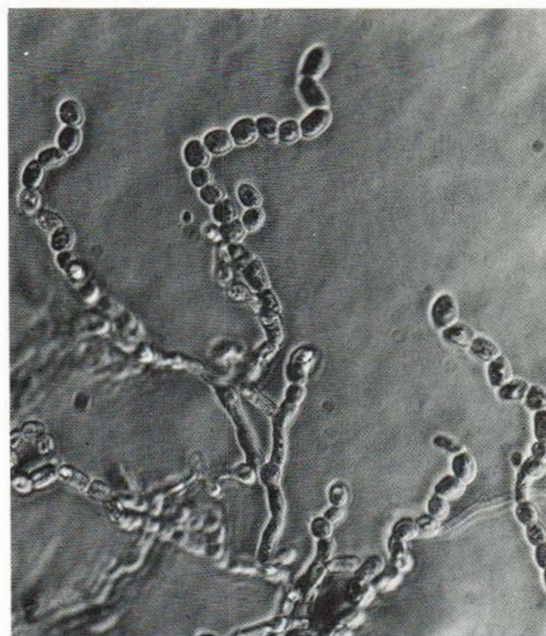


Fig. 3. Creamy-white coloured colony of *Trichosporum cutanum* (T. Beigelii) on Sabouraud's agar.



In April 1974 the patient was examined at the Department of Dermatology, Helsinki University Central Hospital. At the clinical examination, brownish-black nodules were seen along the hair shafts of the scrotal hair. About 20 hairs were visibly affected (Figs 1, 2). The scalp hair, eyebrows, eyelashes, axillary and the rest of pubic hair seemed to be normal. The skin of these areas was also uninvolved. The patient had no subjective symptoms. He had never travelled outside the boundaries of Finland, and he had never had foreign girl friends. The bacteriological examination was negative. The nodules were not fluorescent under Wood's light. From the clinical appearance, Piedra was suspected. Both the apparently normal and the involved hair from the pubic area and the hair from all other areas were taken for mycologic examination.

The culture was done on Sabouraud's agar it was positive from the pubic area. The colonies were at first whitish cream coloured, gradually turning light brown and wrinkled all over the surface (Fig. 3). Slide cultures on corn meal agar showed true branched mycelium and arthrospores; blastospores were absent (Fig. 4).

For 3 years the patient had had a girl friend and she too was examined. Her hair, from all areas of the body, was found normal and fungal cultures proved negative. The patient is living together with his mother, who visited Arizona and Mexico in July 1972. The mother too was examined, with negative results.

DISCUSSION

As far as we know, this is the first case of white piedra that has been found in Finland or any other Scandinavian country. High humidity and abundant rainfall are said to be predisposing factors. No clear differences concerning age or sex have been found.

In this case, the only connection with tropical countries is the patient's mother, whose anamnesis and clinical examinations were negative, however.

Shaving or cutting of the hair have been said to effect a cure. In this case this therapy failed, because the patient shaved only the visibly affected hairs, and the normal-looking hairs of the same area were also infected.

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Fig. 4. Slide cultures on corn meal agar showing true branched mycelium and arthrospores.

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