LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Essential Progressive Telangiectasia

M. Cabanillas, I. Rodriguez-Blanco, M. Ginarte, and J. Toribio
Servicio de Dermatología, Complejo Hospitalario Universitario, Facultad de Medicina, Santiago de Compostela, La Coruña, Spain

To the Editor:

Essential progressive telangiectasia is a rare disorder that affects mainly middle-aged women. It is characterized by the insidious but progressive development of dilated blood vessels and telangiectases. These commonly begin on the lower limbs and gradually extend upwards, potentially extending to cover most of the body surface including the mucous membranes.

We report a 61-year-old woman with no relevant history who presented with the progressive appearance of erythematous lesions on both legs with onset 10 years previously. The lesions were occasionally pruritic and began to appear on both ankles before extending upwards. She reported that her sister and mother suffered from a milder form of a similar disorder. There was no personal or family history of repeated diarrhea, melena, mucosal bleeding, or neurologic abnormalities. Skin examination revealed a large number of enlarged blood vessels that blanched when pressed under glass, against a background of multiple violaceous erythematous punctate lesions from the ankle to the knee and in the distal portion of the thighs on both legs (Figure 1). There were no signs of atrophy, ulceration, tumors, or mucosal abnormalities, and the only outstanding feature was the presence of slight erythema on the face, with some associated papulopustular lesions. Laboratory tests including complete blood count, biochemistry for thyroid

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Systemic symptoms are unusual, although there have been isolated cases of associated gastrointestinal bleeding and 1 case associated with autoimmune disease. The condition has also occasionally been associated with bronchogenic carcinoma or chronic sinusitis.

From a histopathologic point of view, the presence of dilated veins in the upper dermis is a characteristic finding for this condition, sometimes accompanied by a slight superficial perivascular inflammatory infiltrate. Ultrastructural studies suggest the vessels affected by telangiectasis are principally dilated capillaries.

The pathogenesis of the disease is unknown, although some authors have suggested it to involve a vascular reaction to the formation of fibrin microaggregates in capillaries located in areas of relative venous stasis following bacterial or fungal infection. However, the lack of consistent association with bacterial or fungal infection and, above all, the very rare satisfactory response to treatment with antibiotics or fungicides, throw doubt on this hypothesis.

The differential diagnosis for essential progressive telangiectasia also includes both secondary telangiectasia associated with other conditions and other causes of primary telangiectasia. Differential diagnosis between primary telangiectasia and hemorrhagic telangiectasia, ataxia-telangiectasia, or serpiginous angiomatous nevus is especially important. When considering secondary telangiectasia, we would also stress the importance of differential diagnosis with symptoms present in skin diseases due to venous stasis, connective tissue diseases, or telangiectasia macularis eruptiva perstans.

The condition has occasionally been reported to respond to treatment with tetracyclines, fungicides, and even acyclovir, although resistance to these is also common. Laser treatment appears to be the best course of action currently available. Good results have been reported for 585 nm pulsed dye laser and Nd:YAG (neodymium-doped yttrium aluminium garnet) laser.

**References**