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New and old infections in children

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Spotted fever disease is caused by obligate intracellular gram negative bacilli and transmitted to man by arthropod vectors. It is increasingly realised that spotted fever is underdiagnosed. It is now well documented that spotted fever disease is prevalent all over india,in pockets. All over the world, more than 19 types of spotted fever varieties are described depending upon the geographical area where these are prevalent.

The hallmark of spotted fever disease is microvasculitis, causing microinfarcts in various organs. Usually the patients present with classical triad of Fever, Headache & Rash. Apart from this, pain in legs, oedema, Gastro-intestinal symptoms, hepatosplenomegaly, anaemia, necrotic rash, gragrene of digits, toes, earlobes, scrotum, painless eschar and lymphadenopathy are other manifestations. Complications include encephalitis, ARDS, pneumonia, Myocarditis, Renal failure and Vascular collapse. Gold standard test for confirmation of diagnosis is I.F.A. Weil felix test is widely available but unacceptable for accurate diagnosis. However, Weil Felix test can be used in developing countries where other tests are not available. ELISA is preferred and it is now available in india. The drug of choice for all age group is doxycycline. Chloromphenicol can be alternatively used in case of hypersensitivity to Doxycycline. Those patients of spotted fever who develop complications need good supportive care apart from specific anti microbial agents mentioned above.

Spotted fever is a potentially serious illness if not recognized and treated early. Unfortunately, specific serological tests are available in only a few specialized laboratories. Hence, it is imperative to have a high index of suspicion for spotted fever disease and make a clinical diagnosis based on prudent history taking and appropriate physical findings. A therapeutic trial with a specific agent in these patients is justified because a delay in initiating treatment may prove costly. A rapid and favorable response is suggestive of a correct diagnosis.