

A Giant Horn

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Abstract

Cutaneous horns are very uncommon conical keratinous excrescences of the skin that resemble animal horns. They can be seen on any part of the body especially the face, scalp and extremities. A cutaneous horn can result from a benign, pre-malignant or a frankly malignant lesion. We report a case of a giant cutaneous horn on a woman's cheek overlying a seborrheic keratosis.

Keywords: Cutaneous horn; Seborrheic keratosis; Skin tumor

Case report

A 96 years old woman presented with a large horn-like outgrowth on the left cheek. This excrescence has been slowly growing for many years. Medical examination found a hyperkeratotic elongated curved projection of 8 x 3 cm on the left cheek with a large base (Figure 1). There were no other lesions on the rest of the face and scalp and no regional lymphadenopathy.



Figure 1: Cutaneous horn on a woman's cheek

Surgical excision of the entire lesion with primary closure of the skin defect was performed under local anesthesia. Histopathological examination showed epidermal acanthosis with papillomatosis and hyperkeratosis. There was no sign of malignant infiltration. These

features were suggestive of cutaneous horn overlying a seborrheic keratosis.

Discussion

The term cutaneous horn or cornu cutaneum, was assigned specifically to describe a keratin mass on the skin surface that is at least as high as it is wide [1]; however it's commonly used to refer to any dermatological lesion that resembles a miniature animal horn.

Cutaneous horns can have different forms. Usually single and conical, they can be white or yellowish, straight or curved. Their sizes go from few millimetres to over 35 centimetres [2].

They can be seen on different areas, predominantly on the cephalic and cervical region. They can also affect the extremities: hands, feet or genitalia. But usually they occur on sun exposed areas [2,3].

Cutaneous horns are commonly known to be rare, but the exact incidence is unknown. It's more common in patients with lighter phototypes since the prevalence of actinic keratosis and squamous cell carcinomas is higher in these populations. These cutaneous horns can occur in any age with a peak between 60 and 75 years. There is no sex predilection but men are more likely to have underlying malignant and premalignant lesions [2,4].

The pathogenesis of cutaneous horns remains a mystery. The hyperkeratosis that constitutes the horn arises from a hyperproliferative lesion. In fact, the process at the base of the lesion is the most important to identify, as the horn can be associated with a benign, a pre-malignant or a malignant condition [4]. Usually it's an actinic keratosis, squamous cell carcinoma, seborrheic keratosis, molluscum contagiosum, verruca vulgaris, trichilemmoma or basal cell carcinoma [4-6]. Other conditions can also rarely lead to cutaneous horns, such as Kaposi's sarcoma [7], keratoacanthoma, or Paget's disease. It was even described in association with metastatic renal cell carcinoma [8,9].

The treatment of cutaneous horns is usually surgical with histological examination of the whole lesion, especially the base, to determine its nature and to guide any further treatment.

Conclusion

Cutaneous horns are a rare manifestation of many skin conditions. The main issue, apart from the aesthetic aspect, is to determine whether the underlying lesion is benign or malignant in order to assure the best management for the patients.

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