

Introduction

Dermatillomania or skin picking disorder (SPD) is a repetitive skin picking practice leading to tissue damage, infection, and possibly more serious health consequences (1, 2). Discovering the underlying cause can be difficult because the overlying skin damage may mask the underlying primary lesion (2). The aim of this preliminary report is to report a unique case on dermatillomania leading to the amputation of toes and emphasize the importance of psychological involvement in the treatment approach.

Methods

A 64 year old female diabetic patient presented with skin injury to her hallux and 3rd toe. She had a history of poorly controlled diabetes, anxiety, depression, and prior psychiatric treatment for emotional trauma. She had pharmacological & behavioral treatment for her condition. Despite this, the skin picking continued. Upon initial treatment, She was treated with local wound care. Upon poor adherence to provided treatment, the patient developed deep wounds to her right foot toes. Subsequently, the patient developed a deep infection with suspicion for osteomyelitis. She was admitted to the hospital for advanced imaging, intravenous antibiotics, and further management. Magnetic resonance imaging confirmed osteomyelitis.

Results

Amputations of the right hallux and 3rd toe were performed. The patient was instructed to avoid picking at the skin and to apply a bland moisturizer twice daily to help the surgical sites heal. Semi-occlusive dressings were also found to be beneficial. Psychiatry was consulted to prescribe new medications & a new behavioral approach for the dermatillomania disorder. Wound care and close outpatient follow-up were continued. The patient was able to adhere to the treatment and achieve complete healing of the surgical sites without complications.



Fig. 1: Initial Picking of Hallux



Fig. 2: Ulcers to Hallux and 3rd Toe



Fig. 3: Continued Picking



Fig. 5: Severe wounds and infection



Fig. 5: Partial Amputation of Hallux and 3rd Toe, 4 Years Later

Discussion

SPD is a less common disorder, which can have potentially serious health consequences (3). This patient was aware of her behaviors and repercussions, but still couldn't stop the behaviors. Our case demonstrates that patients with repetitive foot skin picking may develop wounds that can lead to infections and ultimately to a limb loss in a diabetic. This particular case highlights the need for a multidisciplinary approach including psychiatric help when treating patients with SPD. It is crucial to exclude other medical or psychiatric conditions (2). These patients will benefit from a referral to the psychiatric team (3).

References

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