CASE REPORT

Localised genital Norwegian scabies in an AIDS patient
A G Perna, K Bell, T Rosen

OBJECTIVES: We present a case of an AIDS patient with Norwegian scabies manifest by a single, crusted plaque localised to the glans penis.

METHODS: A 45 year old man with AIDS presented to our clinic complaining of a red papular pruritic rash on his abdomen and anterior thighs and a single, thick, crusted, non-pruritic lesion on the penis. He had been treated with lindane topically prior to the development of the penile lesion without resolution of the pruritus or red papular lesions. A mineral oil preparation was obtained from the hyperkeratotic penile lesion and revealed numerous mite eggs and faeces.

RESULTS: The diagnosis of localised, genital Norwegian scabies was made. The patient was treated with ivermectin 200 μg/kg dose taken as two doses, 14 days apart, with complete resolution of both pruritus and skin lesions.

CONCLUSIONS: This patient is the first known report of Norwegian scabies localised as a single lesion on the penis. He was successfully treated with oral ivermectin monotherapy.

Norwegian scabies, or crusted scabies, is a severe form of infestation by Sarcoptes scabiei seen in immunocompromised patients. Patients characteristically develop extensive thick, hyperkeratotic lesions in a more or less generalised fashion with notable involvement of the extremities—back, face, scalp, and periangual region.1–3 Although the clinical appearance can vary dramatically to include papular and psoriasiform eruptions, lesions are usually not the clinical appearance can vary dramatically to include papular and psoriasiform eruptions, lesions are usually not.

DISCUSSION
Norwegian (crusted) scabies most commonly develops in the population of HIV infected patients; however, individuals with other severe immunosuppressive diseases or those who use systemic or topical immunosuppressants are similarly susceptible.1 This is probably because of the inability of the immune system to combat the mites, thereby facilitating an overwhelming reproduction.

There is a wide range of presentations of Norwegian scabies in AIDS patients. Lesions range from thick, crusted plaques to red papules to psoriasiform plaques to hyperkeratotic yellow coloured papules resembling Darier’s disease.2 Burrows are characteristic in typical scabies, but may be absent in scabies among AIDS patients.1,5 Pruritus is absent or decreased with Norwegian scabies compared to the intense pruritus characteristic of ordinary scabies.1,2 The lesions in Norwegian scabies are classically distributed on the extremities, but are frequently found on the back, face, scalp, and around the nailfolds.1,3 Our patient’s presentation of pruritic red papules on the abdomen and thighs without burrows was not unusual for an AIDS patient with Sarcoptes scabiei infestation, but the presence of a single thickly hyperkeratotic plaque localised to the glans penis has not yet been reported.

Crusted scabies is particularly difficult to treat because traditional topical therapies do not penetrate sufficiently to eliminate the infection. Attention has turned towards the use of oral ivermectin as a highly effective alternative treatment,8–10 but there remains no definitive consensus on the optimal dosing regimen (including the total number of doses and interval between them) and on the need for concomitant topical therapy.8–10 The majority of reports suggest the use of two doses (200 μg/kg each) given 2 weeks apart. Our patient’s pruritus and all cutaneous lesions resolved completely following administration of this exact regimen and without the necessity for adjunctive topical therapy.

Figure 1 A single crusted penile lesion representing Norwegian scabies in AIDS patient.
CONTRIBUTORS
All three authors directly contributed to the care of this patient and writing and editing of this manuscript.

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