Childhood Systemic Sclerosis with Calcified Foci Over Scalp

This 15 year old boy, a skin biopsy proven case of limited cutaneous systemic sclerosis, was first seen at our out-patient department five years back. His duration of symptom was 2 years. He had Raynaud’s phenomenon, skin tightening involving the extremities, face and neck. He also had dysphagia and ulcers over bony prominences including knuckles. He did not have subcutaneous calcification and telangiectasia at that time. He was investigated in detail. He had neither muscle weakness nor elevation of muscle enzymes. He had taken irregular treatment including d-penicillamine.

Three months ago he presented with multiple nodular swellings over the posterior aspect of the scalp of one year duration (Fig. 1). The history and clinical examination revealed that he had recovered from the previous problems except for the residual scarring over the knuckles. All relevant investigations were normal except for the x-ray skull which showed calcified foci (Fig. 2).

Calcinosis cutis, a dystrophic calcification of subcutaneous tissue of unclear aetiology, is one of the manifestations of systemic sclerosis. It usually occurs around elbows, metacarpophalageal joints and knees. Scalp is an unusual site for calcification. This patient is being treated with diltiazem. Diltiazem apart from reducing influx of calcium into the cell, also prevents mitochondrial sodium-calcium exchange and consequently extrusion of calcium salts from the cells to the extra-cellular space. This action may be useful to prevent further calcification.

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