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Perspective

Challenges and Insights of Bullous Scabies in Immunocompromised Individuals

Mati Lapidoth*

Department of Dermatology, Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, United States of America

DESCRIPTION

Scabies, a highly contagious parasitic infestation of the skin caused by the mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*, is a common condition encountered globally. However, bullous scabies, a rare and atypical presentation characterized by the formation of large blisters or bullae, is less frequently observed and often associated with immunocompromised states. In this article, they focus into the subtle of bullous scabies, particularly its manifestation in immunocompromised hosts, exploring its clinical features, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and management.

Scabies typically presents with pruritic papules, burrows, and excoriations in characteristic distribution patterns, such as interdigital spaces, wrists, elbows, axillae, and genitalia. The symptoms of scabies infestation is intense itching, particularly at night, which results from a delayed hypersensitivity reaction to mite antigens and their products. While the classic presentation is sufficient for diagnosis in most cases, atypical manifestations such as bullous scabies, can pose diagnostic challenges, especially in immunocompromised individuals.

Bullous scabies is a variant of scabies characterized by the formation of large, fluid-filled blisters or bullae on the skin. These bullae typically occur in areas of intense scrubbing and are thought to result from the mechanical trauma inflicted during scrubbing combined with the immune response to mite antigens. While bullous scabies can occur in immunocompetent individuals, it is more commonly observed in those with underlying immunodeficiency states, such as HIV/AIDS, hematologic malignancies, organ transplantation, or immunosuppressive therapy.

Immunocompromised individuals are at heightened risk for bullous scabies due to their impaired immune response, which facilitates unchecked mite proliferation and exacerbates the inflammatory reaction to mite antigens. In conditions such as HIV/AIDS, the depletion of CD^{4+} T cells controlled both cellular and humoral immunity, leading to a diminished ability to mount an effective immune response against the mite. Similarly, patients undergoing immunosuppressive therapy, such as corticosteroids or chemotherapy, are predisposed to bullous scabies due to the suppression of immune function.

The clinical presentation of bullous scabies may vary depending on the severity of infestation and host factors. In immunocompromised hosts, bullous lesions are often extensive, widespread, and associated with severe pruritus. The presence of bullae may obscure the classic burrows and papules seen in typical scabies, making diagnosis challenging. Dermoscopy and skin scrapings for microscopic examination can aid in the diagnosis by identifying mites, eggs, or fecal pellets. However, in cases of bullous scabies, these conventional diagnostic methods may yield false or negative results, necessitating a high index of clinical suspicion.

The pathogenesis of bullous scabies in immunocompromised hosts involves a complex interplay between the host immune response and the virulence factors of the scabies mite. The mite's proteolytic enzymes, secreted during burrowing, disrupt the epidermal barrier and induce an inflammatory response characterized by the release of cytokines and chemokines. In immunocompromised individuals, this inflammatory response is dysregulated, resulting in exaggerated inflammation and the formation of bullae. Additionally, impaired cell-mediated immunity predisposes to uncontrolled mite proliferation, exacerbating the severity of infestation and associated skin manifestations.

The management of bullous scabies in immunocompromised hosts encompasses both pharmacologic and supportive measures aimed at eradicating the mite infestation, alleviating symptoms, and preventing complications. Treatment typically involves the application of topical scabicidal agents, such as permethrin or benzyl benzoate, to the entire body surface, followed by oral antiparasitic agents, such as ivermectin, for systemic eradication of the mite. In severe cases or those with extensive bullous lesions, systemic corticosteroids may be considered to suppress the inflammatory response and alleviate pruritus. Additionally, meticulous skin care and hygiene practices, including the removing of fingernails and avoidance of scrubbing, are essential to prevent secondary bacterial infections and promote healing.

Correspondence to: Mati Lapidoth, Department of Dermatology, Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, United States of America, E-mail: mati.lapidoth@icloud.com

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The prognosis of bullous scabies in immunocompromised hosts depends on the underlying immune status, the extent of infestation, and the promptness of treatment initiation. While bullous scabies is generally responsive to antiscabietic therapy, delayed diagnosis and inadequate treatment can lead to complications, such as secondary bacterial infections, cellulitis, and sepsis. In severe cases, bullous scabies may contribute to the deterioration of the patient's overall health status and necessitate hospitalization for intensive management.

CONCLUSION

Bullous scabies in immunocompromised hosts represents a rare yet significant manifestation of scabies infestation, characterized by extensive bullae formation and severe pruritus. Clinicians should maintain a high index of suspicion for bullous scabies in immunocompromised individuals presenting with atypical skin lesions, particularly those with HIV/AIDS, hematologic malignancies, or receiving immunosuppressive therapy. Early recognition and prompt initiation of treatment are important to prevent complications and improve outcomes in this vulnerable population. Further research is warranted to elucidate the pathogenesis and optimal management strategies for bullous scabies in immunocompromised hosts, with the ultimate goal of enhancing patient care and reducing the burden of this debilitating condition.