Case report

Oral psoriasis: an atypical case

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Abstract – Psoriasis is a chronic cutaneous inflammatory disease. We describe the case of a 60-year-old woman presenting both general psoriasis and oral erythematous erosive lesions. History and histopathology of the lesions tend to prove a link with her general psoriasis. Local applications of betamethasone provides rapid improvement of the symptomatology.

Oral lesions of psoriasis are rare and controversial. There is some evidence that fissurated or geographic tongue present a statistical correlation with skin psoriasis. Our case present unusual features which were never described so far and that could be source of misdiagnosis.


Key words: psoriasis / oral manifestations / oral ulcer / stomatitis

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Psoriasis is a chronic inflammatory condition primarily affecting the skin [1,2]. Approximately 1–3% of the global population is affected and 50% of cases appear before the second decade of life [2]. It is characterized by erythematous papules covered by silvery scales, that gradually enlarge at the periphery, forming plaques. Its etiology remains unknown, but it appears to be multifactorial with genetic and psychosomatic factors. Various triggers, such as trauma, infection and stress, may cause new episodes [2].

Oral psoriasis is a rare entity and remains a subject of controversy [3,4]. In this paper, we report a case of oral psoriasis revealed by a geographic stomatitis.

Observation

A 60-year-old woman was referred in the Department of Oral Surgery for the evaluation of erosive lesions of lips and cheeks, with a sensation of burning, which has lasted for 4 months. In her antecedents we noted a history of inverted psoriasis.

The intraoral examination revealed large erythematous papules of the right cheek with irregular areas of erosion surrounded by a discrete keratotic/jagged aspect (Fig. 1). She complains of a sensation of burning improved by meals. The appearance of these lesions have concurred with an emotional shock, concomitant with a crisis of inverted psoriasis. A fissurated tongue is also observed (Fig. 3).

The diagnosis of oral psoriasis was proposed, even though other diagnostic such as oral lichen planus, pemphigus or pemphigoid were possible. Two biopsy were performed at the periphery of the lesions for histological and direct immunofluorescence examination. Histologically, tissues showed a pattern consistent with psoriasis (Fig. 4). Direct immunofluorescence was negative. The diagnosis of oral psoriasis could be confirmed on the basis of three arguments: presence of a general psoriasis, concomitance between the beginning of the oral symptomatology and a general psoriatic crisis, and histopathological psoriasiform pattern.

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A topical treatment of betamethasone was given to the patient for 10 days and for each new crisis. At the 15-days and 6-months controls, she reported a great decrease of pain and of the duration of the episodes. Nevertheless, lesions were always seen on the buccal mucosa even if their erosive component was considerably diminished (Fig. 2). Furthermore, we observed a migration of the lesions, which was characteristic of a geographic stomatitis.

**Fig. 1.** Internal face of the right cheek at the first consultation. Note the erosive areas surrounded by a discrete keratotic, jagged border.

**Fig. 2.** Internal face of the right cheek after 6 months of evolution. The erosive areas have strongly diminished in size and number.

**Fig. 3.** Discreetly fissurated tongue.

**Fig. 4.** Histopathological view of the lesion (mean magnification, hematoxylin-eosin staining). The epithelium is acanthosic and psoriasiform with a regular papillomatosis but no hyperkeratosis can be seen. The chorion is congestive and oedematous with an important inflammatory cell infiltrate and occasional exocytosis mainly in the papillas.

**Comments**

Oral lesions of psoriasis are very uncommon and their existence is still disputed [5-7], because neither the clinical nor the histological changes are absolutely specific [1,2,5,8]. Nevertheless, for some authors a diagnosis of oral lesions of
Psoriasis can be proposed when their clinical course runs parallel to that of the skin and is supported by histologic examination [1,2,5,6,8,9].

Fissurated tongue [4,7,10,11] and geographic tongue or stomatitis [10-12] are classically described as typical oral manifestations of psoriasis and seem to be statistically more prevalent in the psoriasis group. However, their link with psoriasis remains unproven [7]. Their histologic features are similar to those of a cutaneous psoriasis [3,9,13-15], but the histological distinction between psoriasis and isolated geographic/fissurated tongue cannot be made [11].

In this case, the oral lesions have an aspect of geographic stomatitis with atypical aspects that could also be assigned to a lichen planus or a bullous disease.

Geographic stomatitis is very rare [9,16] and usually shows flattened, circinate, erythematos areas surrounded by a keratotic border [15,17].

In the present case, the erythematos and erosive aspects are predominant and keratosis is clinically discrete and histologically absent. The erosive aspect was never described in the literature.

Like in geographic tongue, the lesions can migrate with time and show both active and remission phases [18]; our diagnosis of geographic stomatitis is mainly based on this feature.

Like in this case report, an association of geographic stomatitis with geographic/fissurated tongue is possible [19] and some patients report a sensation of burning and/or dryness [15].

**Conclusion**

Despite of a large controversy, there is some evidence that fissurated/geographic tongue or stomatitis present a statistical correlation with skin psoriasis. This fact has many clinical implications. Oral lesions usually do not interfere with daily activities but in some rare cases they can cause disability. In these cases, recognition of the pathology is essential. The diagnosis of an oral psoriasis depends mainly on the convergence of clinical arguments and histological arguments.

Finally, the reported case present unusual features which were never described so far and that could be source of misdiagnosis.

**Competing interests:** none

**References**


