Clinical Picture

Calcinosis cutis universalis

A 67-year-old woman was presented in our dermatologic outpatient clinic. She reported that for at least two decades her skin became erythematous with a slight itching and a progressively hardening over her body. In the last months some ulcerations of the skin arose and she developed severe pain. At both hands, she had violaceous papules overlying the metacarpal and interphalangeal joints and periungual teleangiectasias. The clinical impressive findings were verified by X-ray diagnostics and computer tomography as generalized subcutaneous calcifications without abnormal bone calcification (Figure 1). Serological we found amongst others massive elevated antinuclear antibodies (ANA) and positive anti-Jo-1 antibodies. Taken together the serological and histopathological results we diagnosed a calcinosis cutis universalis because of an underlying dermatomyositis and started a systemic treatment with azathioprine.

Calcinosis cutis is a rare condition characterized by the deposition of calcium phosphate (hydroxyapatite) crystals in the skin in various areas of the body. This calcinosis cutis can be associated with normal or elevated calcium levels. Minimally intense calcinosis cutis is a frequent symptom seen in patients with scleroderma CREST syndrome, lupus erythematosus, overlap syndromes or dermatomyositis.1 Likewise the rarely described calcinosis cutis universalis is mostly associated with collagenoses but even other diseases like graft-versus-host can be rare causes.2 Pathophysiologically, it can be divided into dystrophic, metastatic and idiopathic types. Even if successful therapies, for example, with probenecid, diltiazem, warfarin aluminum hydroxide, colchicine or bisphosphonates had been described surgical excision is for most patients an effective option.3 Finally, it is most important to diagnose the associated or underlying systemic diseases to enable a causative treatment.

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References


Figure 1. A 67-year-old woman with dermatomyositis-induced calcinosis cutis universalis; (a) clinical findings and (b) X-ray findings of the upper part of the body.