

Kalava-induced foreign body reaction



To the Editor: We read with great interest the articles by Vashi et al^{1,2} highlighting the dermatoses caused by various cultural practices. Dermatoses occurring as a result of various cultural and religious practices are quite common among Indian patients.^{1,2} We take this opportunity to discuss a common Hindu practice and its rare dermatologic implication.

Kalava is a sacred Hindu thread tied circumferentially across the forearm just proximal to the wrist joint during religious and cultural ceremonies (Fig 1). Usually it is tied loose enough

to avoid any pressure or friction on the underlying skin. Recently we have come across cases of tightly tied Kalava inducing a foreign body reaction among children. There is usually a history of Kalava being tied too tightly in these cases and because of religious reasons parents do not untie it. In such cases, swelling and pain typically develop at the site within 2 weeks. Sometimes, the threads of Kalava may even penetrate the inflamed skin leading to the foreign body reaction at that site (Fig 2). Management includes removal of any residual thread in the swelling, a topical antibiotic, and a topical corticosteroid. Systemic antibiotics may be



Fig 1. Kalava is tied just proximal to the wrist joint.



Fig 2. Foreign body reaction in circumferential fashion on the ventral (A) and dorsal (B) aspect of the forearm.

required in special circumstances. The swelling usually subsides within 2 weeks. Severe cases may result in scarring.

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