



Pyoderma gangrenosum as first manifestation of Crohn's disease

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A 38-year-old man was referred to our outpatient clinic for painful deep purulent ulcerations with purple surrounding erythema on the back, which had developed over a period of approximately 8 months (Fig. 1).

The surgical history included only idiopathic megarectum, treated 16 years before. The patient was admitted to our clinic in poor general condition. Routine laboratory and radiologic tests were negative for vasculitis and malignancy.

Skin biopsies of the lesions revealed a mixed inflammatory response with predominant neutrophilic infiltrate, pyoderma gangrenosum (PG) and secondary infection by mixed pathogens. Colonoscopy revealed an active colitis and the final histopathology report was consistent with Crohn's disease. The patient was treated with mesalazine and prednisone as well as with mercaptopurine for maintenance. Biologic therapy was administered according to International guidelines and antibiotics were administered to control secondary infection.

The skin lesions slowly resolved over a 14-month period (Fig. 2).

PG is a complex neutrophilic dermatosis that can occur most commonly in individuals 20–50 years old and approximately in 50% of patients it is associated with other diseases such as systemic immune-mediated diseases (IMD) [1].

Corticosteroids have been considered as the first-line treatment and recently tumor necrosis alpha (TNF- α) inhibitors, such as infliximab, were reported to be effective for PG associated with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) [2].

Patients with IBD are more likely to develop IMD due to the well-known overlaps between pathogenic pathways.

For this reason, even if less than 1% of patients with Crohn's disease develop PG [3], IBD should be suspected in all cases of necrotic skin lesions.

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Fig. 1 The skin lesions with erythematous excavated borders and a necrotic center



Fig. 2 After 14 months of therapy, the skin ulcers were almost healed with only pigmentation remaining

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any of the authors.

Informed consent Informed consent was obtained from the participant included in the study.

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