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Telogen Effluvium, Post Covid 19 – A Case Report

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Introduction:

Telogen effluvium is characterized by the sudden onset of hair thinning. The resulting alopecia does not leave scars, is noninflammatory, and most commonly occurs in women. Several underlying mechanisms have been identified for telogen effluvium.

Case Presentation:

A 53-year-old woman presents to the dermatology clinic complaining of hair thinning. She states that the condition was first noted several weeks ago and is of cosmetic concern. She has hypertension, for which she is taking hydrochlorothiazide; treatment was started over two years ago. Recent thyroid assays, ordered by her family physician, are within normal limits. She was diagnosed with COVID-19 approximately three months ago; she had received both vaccinations and a booster before infection. Physical examination revealed diffuse hair thinning, a positive hair pull, and no visible abnormalities of her scalp other than decreased hair density. See the figure below.

Diagnosis:

Telogen effluvium

Discussion:

Telogen effluvium is characterized by the sudden onset of hair thinning. The resulting alopecia does not leave scars, is noninflammatory, and most commonly occurs in women. Several underlying mechanisms have been identified for telogen effluvium. These include an accelerated premature shift from the growth phase (anagen) to the involution phase (catagen) and resting phase (telogen), as well as prolongation of the anagen phase resulting in heavy telogen shedding.[1]

Patients with telogen effluvium experience an abrupt onset of diffuse generalized shedding and may lose hundreds of hairs daily. Moderate tugging on scalp hairs (pull test) is positive, with greater than 10% or more hairs readily extracted during the active phase.[2] The condition is often precipitated by identifiable stressors, including pregnancy, nutritional deficiency, medications including beta blockers and oral contraceptives, rapid weight loss, and febrile illnesses. About one-third of cases are idiopathic.[1]

Telogen effluvium is the most common hair disorder associated with COVID-19, with the highest prevalence in those experiencing severe disease.[3] In an international study, the majority (62.5%) of the patients with telogen effluvium hair signs and symptoms started within the first month after COVID-19 diagnosis; 47.8% of patients' hair loss started 3 to 4 months after infection.[3]

In a recent analysis of 10 patients presenting with hair thinning post-COVID-19 infection, all were women, and four had required prior hospitalization.[4] A study by Aksoy et al. found that some degree of hair loss developed in 27.9% of people who have had COVID.[5] Telogen

effluvium associated with COVID-19 is a self-limited disorder, and patients should be reassured that hair normalization over a period of several months is to be anticipated.

Treatment:

Telogen effluvium associated with COVID-19 is a self-limited disorder, and patients should be reassured that hair normalization over a period of several months is to be anticipated

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