

Clinical Cases in Dermatology
Series Editor: Robert A. Norman

Dédée F. Murrell *Editor*

Clinical Cases in Autoimmune Blistering Diseases



Springer

Clinical Cases in Dermatology

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Editor

Clinical Cases in Autoimmune Blistering Diseases

 Springer

Editor

Dédée F. Murrell, M.A., BMBCh,
M.D., FAAD, FACD, FRCP
Department of Dermatology,
St George Hospital,
University of New South Wales
Kogarah, Sydney,
New South Wales
Australia

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Editors and Contributors

Editor

Dédée F. Murrell, M.A., BMBCh, M.D., FAAD, FACD, FRCP Department of Dermatology, St George Hospital
Sydney, NSW, Australia

University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Contributors

Valeria Aoki, M.D., Ph.D. Immunodermatology Laboratory,
Department of Dermatology, University of Sao Paulo
Medical School, São Paulo, Brazil

Kamran Balighi, M.D. Department of Dermatology,
Autoimmune Bullous Research Centre, Razi Hospital,
Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Luca Borradori, M.D. Department of Dermatology,
University Hospital Bern, Bern, Switzerland

Cheyda Chams-Davatchi, M.D. Department of
Dermatology, Autoimmune Bullous Diseases Research
Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Amy Y-Y Chen, M.D., FAAD Department of Dermatology,
Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, MA, USA

Donna Aline Culton, M.D., Ph.D. Department of Dermatology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA

Maryam Daneshpazhooh, M.D. Department of Dermatology, Autoimmune Bullous Diseases Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Luis A. Diaz Department of Dermatology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA

Melanie Joy C. Doria University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Department of Dermatology, St George Hospital, Sydney, NSW, Australia

David Fivenson, M.D. Department of Dermatology, PLLC, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Maryam Ghiasi, M.D. Department of Dermatology, Autoimmune Bullous Diseases Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Autoimmune Bullous Diseases Research Center, Razi Hospital, Tehran, Iran

Adam G. Harris, MBChB Department of Dermatology, St George Hospital, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Stefanie Häfliger, M.D. Department of Dermatology, University Hospital Bern, Bern, Switzerland

Sarolta Kárpáti Department of Dermatology, Venereology and Dermatoooncology, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary

Monia Kharfi, M.D., Ph.D. Department of Dermatology, Hôpital Charles Nicolle, Tunis, Tunisia

Nokubonga F. Khoza, MBChB, FCDerm Department of Dermatology, Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine, University of Kwazulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

Vahide Lajevardi, M.D. Autoimmune Bullous Diseases Research Center, Department of Dermatology, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Julia S. Lehman, M.D., FAAD Departments of Dermatology and Laboratory Medicine and Pathology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN, USA

Nigel G. Maher, BMed, BDSc(Hons), B.Sc., FRACDS Department of Dermatology, St George Hospital, Sydney, NSW, Australia

University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Denise Miyamoto, M.D. Immunodermatology Laboratory, Department of Dermatology, University of Sao Paulo Medical School, São Paulo, Brazil

Nayera H. Moftah, M.D. Department of Dermatology and Venereology, Faculty of Medicine for Girls, Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt

Sophie-Charlotte Mook Department of Dermatology, University of Lübeck, Lübeck, Germany

Anisa Mosam, MBChB, FCDerm, MMed Department of Dermatology, Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine, University of Kwazulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

Ziba Rahbar Autoimmune Bullous Diseases Research Center, Department of Dermatology, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Elizabeth S. Robinson, BSE Philadelphia Veteran Affairs Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Department of Dermatology, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Zahra Safaei-Naraghi, M.D. Department of Dermatopathology, Autoimmune Bullous Research Centre, Razi Hospital, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Enno Schmidt, M.D., Ph.D. Department of Dermatology,
University of Lübeck, Lübeck, Germany

Nina Schumacher Department of Dermatology, University
of Lübeck, Lübeck, Germany

Iakov Shimanovich Department of Dermatology, University
of Lübeck, Lübeck, Germany

Nina van Beek Department of Dermatology, University of
Luebeck, Luebeck, Germany

Victoria P. Werth, M.D. Philadelphia Veteran Affairs
Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Department of Dermatology, University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia, PA, USA

Kristen Whitney, DO Department of Dermatology,
St Joseph Mercy Health System, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Xinyi Yang University of New South Wales, Sydney,
NSW, Australia

Cathy Zhao, M.B.B.S., MMed Department of Dermatology,
St George Hospital, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Detlef Zillikens Department of Dermatology,
University of Lübeck, Lübeck, Germany

Chapter 1

An Elderly Patient with a Generalized Pruritic Eruption

Stefanie Häfliger and Luca Borradori

A 86-year-old patient presented with generalized pruritic eruption of 3 month duration. The patient had a past history of type 2 insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia and arterial hypertension. On examination, the patient showed widespread excoriations, prurigo-like lesions, post-inflammatory hypopigmentations, with atrophic scarring distributed predominantly over his trunk, upper limbs, neck, and scalp (Fig. 1.1a–c). On his lower limbs, some scratched lesions were also observed. The patient also had isolated erosions on his buccal mucosa (Fig. 1.1d). Light microscopy studies showed changes consistent with chronic prurigo. Direct immunofluorescence microscopy studies obtained from perilesional skin showed linear deposits of IgG and C3 along the epidermal basement membrane zone. By indirect IF microscopy using NaCl-separated normal human skin, there were circulating IgG autoantibodies binding the epidermal side of the split. The search of circulating anti-BP180 antibodies by ELISA was positive (41.7 U/ml; N: 9 < U/ml).

S. Häfliger, M.D. • L. Borradori, M.D. (✉)
Department of Dermatology, University Hospital Bern,
Freiburgstrasse, 3010 Bern, Switzerland
e-mail: Luca.Borradori@insel.ch and Stefanie.Haefliger@insel.ch

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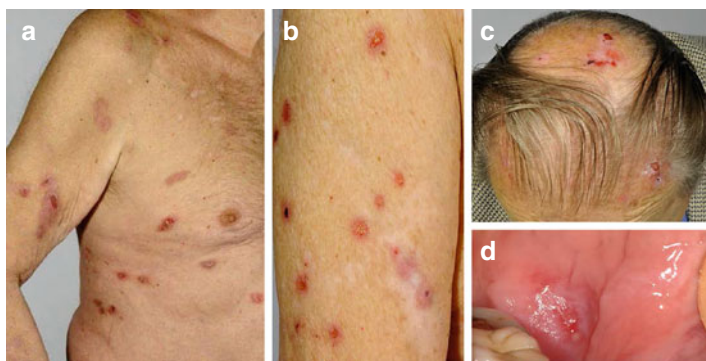


FIGURE 1.1 (a) Excoriations, postinflammatory hypopigmentations and atrophic scarring on trunk and arms; (b) Close-up view of excoriations and scarring with isolated milia on arm; (c) Erosions, crusting and atrophic scarring on the scalp; (d) Erosion on buccal mucosa

What Is Your Diagnosis?

- Bullous pemphigoid (BP)
- Mucous membrane pemphigoid
- Brunsting-Perry pemphigoid

Discussion (1)

Diagnosis of BP is not always easy and straightforward. Manifestations of BP might resemble those of a variety of dermatoses, including drug reactions, contact dermatitis, prurigo, fixed urticaria, vasculitis, arthropod reaction and scabies (Table 1.1). Although the recent availability of ELISAs have facilitated the search of circulating autoantibodies, diagnosis still relies on a combination of clinical, histopathological and immunopathological features, particularly direct IF microscopy findings [5].

Our patient presented with chronic excoriated lesions and post-inflammatory changes predominantly localized on the

TABLE 1.1 Clinical presentations of bullous pemphigoid

Chronic prurigo, prurigo nodularis-like features

Papular pemphigoid

Eczematous lesions

Erythema multiforme-like and Lyell-like pemphigoid

Lymphomatoid papulosis-like

Ecthyma-like

Palmo-plantar lesions (dysidrosiform pemphigoid)

Intertrigo (vegetating pemphigoid)

Vesicular pemphigoid

Erythrodermic pemphigoid

Brunsting-Perry form (variant of cicatricial pemphigoid with skin lesions)

Localized forms

Pretibial

Peristomal

Umbilical

“Stump” pemphigoid

On paralyzed body sites

On irradiated/traumatised body sites

upper trunk and his head and as well as isolated lesions of the buccal mucosa. Immunopathological findings were consistent with the pemphigoid group of autoimmune bullous disorders. We favor the diagnosis of an unusual form of chronic prurigo-like BP [5]. Nevertheless, our case presented also with features of the so called Brunsting-Perry variant of mucous membrane pemphigoid [2] with a peculiar extensive cutaneous involvement. In the absence of well recognized criteria, a conclusive classification of our case is not possible.

How Do You Manage This Patient?

- Topical corticosteroids
- Tetracyclines and nicotinamide
- Systemic steroids
- Systemic Steroids and immunosuppressants

Our BP patient was first treated with topical clobetasol propionate 0.05 % combined with doxycycline, 200 mg daily and nicotinamide, 2 g daily. Since this regimen did not sufficiently control his skin disease, the patient was first given sulfasalazine and later oral prednisolone, 0.5 mg per kg body weight. The latter treatment resulted in control of the disease, but led to a severe weight gain and a decompensation of his diabetes. Finally, topical steroids were initiated in combination with azathioprine 75 mg daily which led to a complete remission of the skin disease.

Discussion (2)

BP has frequently a chronic evolution with remissions and relapses. It is associated with significant morbidity, such as severe itch, bullous and eroded lesions, and impetiginisation. The impact on the quality of life is significant [5].

Prior starting a therapy in patients with bullous pemphigoid, the overall clinical context and the evidence about the available therapeutic intervention should be considered: (1) affected patients have usually an advanced age, older than 75 years of age, (2) they have frequently additional comorbidities, such as neurological or cardiovascular diseases (3) they show a significantly increased mortality patients during the first year of treatment. Finally, (4) so far, except for topical and systemic steroids, there are no studies which have validated the use of the other drugs, which have been commonly used in BP [1].

The first line therapeutic option in localized, mild bullous pemphigoid consists of high potency topical corticosteroids