



An Example of Traditional Treatments Administered for Skin Disorders

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Abstract

Even today, when reaching hospitals and specialists is relatively very easy, it is observed that traditional methods are still in use. One of these methods is drawing a line over a dermatosis with a pen, called fixed pen. This method is especially used for superficial fungal infections, and it is believed that this treatment prevents the infection from spreading. Its use is especially prominent for tinea corporis in superficial fungal infections. Fungal infections seen anywhere on the body except hairy skin, beard, hands and feet are called tinea corporis or "ringworm". The tinea corporis is diagnosed by the KOH examination of the material picked up from the periphery of the clinical and active lesion. The treatment usually consists of topical antifungal creams, and rarely requires systemic treatment. The patient with tinea corporis was presented in this study to draw attention to traditional methods.

Keywords: Dermatology, traditional treatment methods, tinea corporis

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Complementary and alternative medicine is the general name given to diagnosis, treatment and prevention methods that are not scientifically proven in terms of efficiency and safety. Most of these methods are treatment methods emerging from long experience and traditions that are unsupported by scientific studies [1]. These are methods that are administered around the whole world in dermatology, and their frequency varies according to countries between 35-69%. One of these methods is prayer, which is frequently used for verrucous and superficial fungal infections [2].

The 9 years old male patient applied to our clinic with a facial lesion. It was understood that this lesion started small 10 days ago, and then expanded, and it also itched. Moreover, the family expressed that the boy had a dog and that he was in constant contact with the dog. They expressed that one of the neighbors prayed for the lesion and they drew over the lesion with a pen they defined as the '*fixed pen*'. In the dermatological examination, a sharp edged, ring shaped plaque lesion containing erythema, squama and vesicles (Figure 1) which was traced with a pen was found in the forehead region. A 10% KOH native preparation was prepared for diagnosis. A copious amount of hypha was identified in the microscopic examination (Figure 2). Based on the clinical presentation and microscopic examination, the patient was diagnosed with tinea corporis. A rotational local terbinafine (Terbisil®) and butenaphine (Butefin®) cream treatment was prescribed.

Tinea corporis is the name given to the superficial dermatophyte infection observed in skin regions except haired skin, ears, hands, feet and inguinal regions. It is contracted by direct contact with the diseased lesion. The lesion starts as an erythematous papilla and expands, while the middle becomes normal skin. Ring shaped erythematous, sharp edged and small vesicles can be found. The condition may be diagnosed through clinical presentation, in addition to KOH examination and fungal culture. Terbinafine, butenaphine and azol-group antifungals are indicated in its treatment [3]. In addition to these medical treatments, various alternative and traditional methods may be administered. The methods that are generally used for dermatological diseases may be classified as treatments based on biological principles (herbal treatments, dietary supplements), manipulative and body-based treatments (chiropractic medicine, massage), alternative medical treatments (homeopathy and traditional

Chinese medicine), energy based treatments (Qi gong, Reiki, touching) and mind-body relation based treatment methods (meditation, prayer, dance, art, music) [2,4]. In our case, an attempt to treat the dermatophyte infection was made by prayer and drawing over the lesion.

Socio-cultural and religious beliefs affect our daily lives. Additionally, although methods used in relation with these beliefs for various dermatological disorders are harmless for the human body, they may incur some potential risks. These methods are called "*cultural dermatology*". It is important that medical practitioners become aware of "*cultural dermatology*". It is considered important that the modern dermatologists be sensitive against ethno-cultural aspects and question the patients in this regard [5]. Although the mind-body interaction is considered a complementary/alternative treatment method and a part of spiritual treatment, it is also suggested that personal prayers should also be considered complementary/alternative treatment. In a study, the rate of complementary/alternative treatment usage fell to 32% from 62%, when the personal prayers were removed. Thus, it is proposed that prayers are inflating the complementary/alternative medicine usage rates [6]. It was understood that our patient also was subjected to prayer, and his lesion was drawn over with a pen.

In conclusion, there are many traditional methods used for dermatological diseases. One of these methods, especially for tinea corporis which is a dermatophyte infection, is to draw over the lesion with a pen along with a prayer. The patients state that it is believed that this method prevents the expansion of the infection. However, it should also be known that the doctors have a responsibility to inform the patients about these practices.



Figure 1.

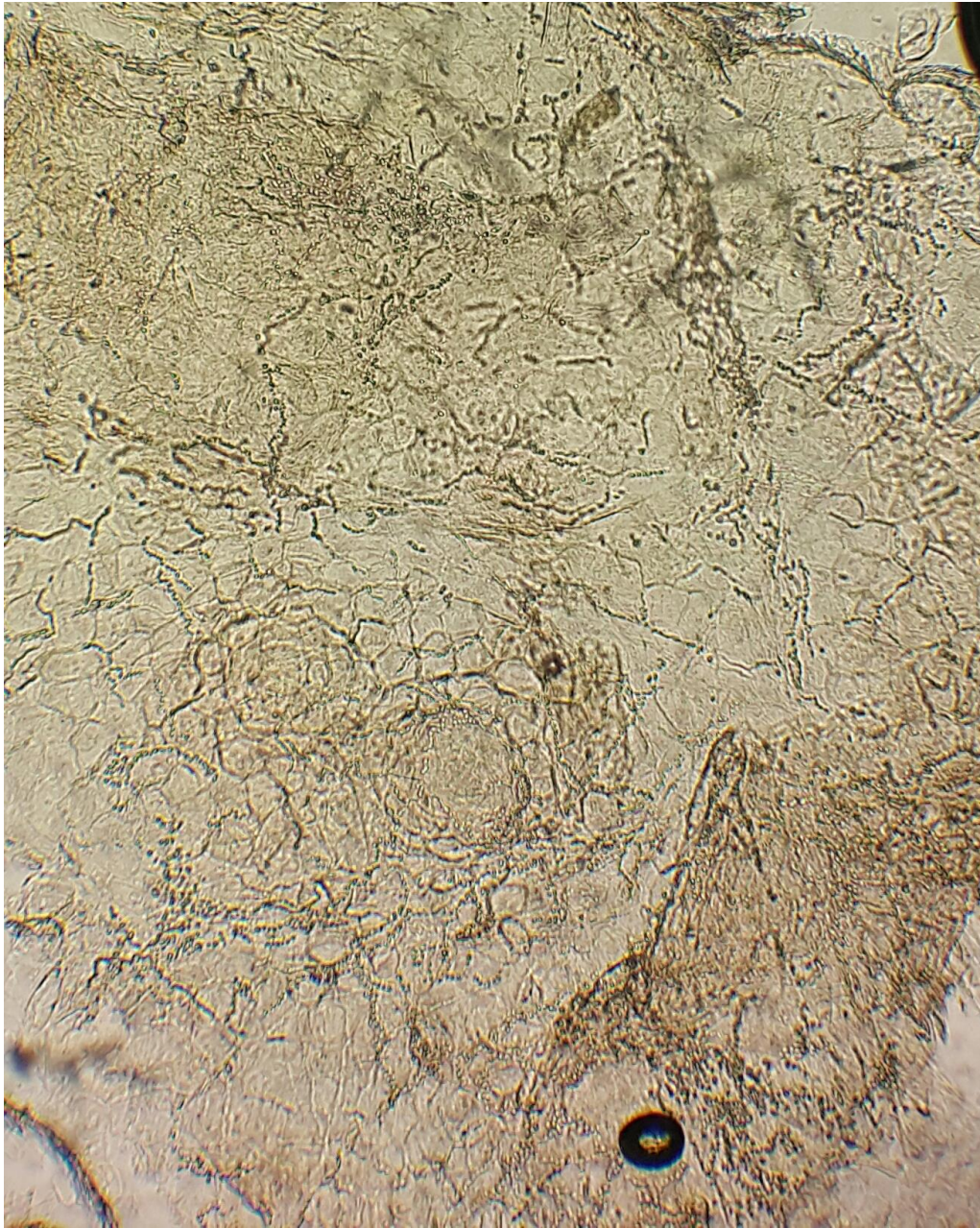


Figure 2.

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