

Editorial

Resurgence of Chickenpox in India

Sandeep Garg^{*}

Chickenpox is an infectious disease which is on the rise in the developing countries. There has been a rise in the viral infections especially in the persons with low immunity like those on steroids, taking chemotherapy, HIV and extremes of age. Till now chickenpox is mainly considered as the disease of the childhood but here the author has tried to emphasize that it can be seen not only in the old people with low immunity but can also be seen in normal healthy adults. The rising trend of the disease has been seen in Delhi also.

It is caused by varicella zoster virus. It spreads from person to person by direct spread or by air borne mode through sneezing and coughing. The incubation period is around 14-16 days. The person can be contagious 1-2 days before the appearance of rash and till crusting of the blisters which usually take 6-8 days. The disease can cause secondary pneumonia and meningitis.

The author has pointed out the atypical presentation and timing of the disease in Delhi. Usually it is seen in winter and early spring season, however, the cases are seen in the months of March and April in Northern India. Whether this trend of occurrence of the disease in the early summer is present in other parts of India or not, is yet to be seen. Regarding the clinical presentation of the disease, it is manifested by fever with rash (of all stages) which is centripetal in nature and involves the trunk and neck area. However the author in his article has pointed out that there has been a rise in the number of cases where the rash is predominantly in the centrifugal areas like on the limbs. The centrifugal distribution of the rash is atypical for chicken pox. This could be due to the involvement of some other virus or due to the mutagenic drift in the virus. The other atypical presentation can be stroke, encephalitis, transverse myelitis, myositis, necrotizing fasciitis, hepatitis etc.

The children now a day are getting vaccinated for the diseases so the adult population which was not vaccinated previously is more susceptible. The vaccination for the chickenpox can be given to adults even after the exposure to the virus. There is a limited role of varicella zoster immunoglobulin (VZIG), except for the use of post exposure prophylaxis in certain conditions.

^{*}Associate Professor, Dept. of Medicine, Maulana Azad Medical College, New Delhi
E-mail: drsandeepgarmamc@gmail.com