

A Nosey Situation

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A 72-year-old male presents with a slowly enlarging nose (Figure 1). He notes that if he squeezes his nose, a creamy-white discharge is extruded. He is otherwise healthy and only takes acetylsalicylic acid prophylactically for his heart.

What is your diagnosis?


Rhinophyma is a finding in patients with rosacea. Rosacea is a clinical diagnosis characterized by variable erythema and telangiectasia on the nose, forehead and cheeks, as well as, in some patients, inflammatory papules and pustules. It is most common in fair-skinned individuals and patients often complain of easy flushing. Triggers that exacerbate rosacea include:

- hot and spicy foods,
- ultraviolet light,
- hot showers,
- exercise and
- wind burn.



Figure 1. Patient with enlarging nose.

Up to 60% of patients with cutaneous rosacea have symptoms of ocular rosacea. These symptoms include dry and gritty eyes that may be accompanied by conjunctival injection and, rarely, chalazion and episcleritis. Patients may complain of periorbital facial edema, which may be the presenting sign. Extra-facial involvement is rare and occurs over the neck and the upper chest. Prominence of the sebaceous glands may be noted with the



development of thickened and disfigured noses (rhinophyma) in extreme cases, and almost exclusively in men.

Unlike patients with acne, patients with rosacea experience dryness, peeling and irritation more than oily skin and, rarely, have comedones. Laboratory examination, imaging and skin biopsy are not required. The differential diagnosis of rosacea may include:

- perioral dermatitis,
- seborrheic dermatitis,
- sarcoidosis and
- lupus erythematosus.

Rhinophyma, as in this case, may occur as an isolated entity without other symptoms or signs of rosacea. It can be disfiguring and, therefore, distressing for patients. Unlike other aspects of rosacea, which can be treated with oral antibiotics, topical metronidazole and vascular laser or light sources, cosmetic improvement of rhinophyma requires surgical measures, including:

- mechanical dermabrasion,
- carbon dioxide laser and
- surgical shave techniques.

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