

### *“Doc...why is my skin still red?”*

Hayder H. Kubba, MD, MBChB, LMCC, FRCS (UK), DFFP, DPD

A 59-year-old Native American presents with areas of redness and thickening of the skin on his face, his hands, his distal forearms and the exposed sites of his neck (Figure 1). These symptoms have been present since he was 21-years-old.

Although he describes having flare-ups in his hands in both winter and summer, he says that the flare-ups are worse during the summer.

#### *What's your diagnosis?*

This is a case of actinic reticuloid. A physical examination revealed red areas limited to the exposed sites of the neck, distal forearms and hands. It also revealed lichenification on the hands, which was difficult to evaluate.

*Actinic reticuloid is extremely common in native individuals; however, the photo-sensitizing factor or factors have yet to be identified.*



Figure 1a. Patient with redness and thickening of the skin on his face.



Figure 1b. Patient with redness and thickening of the skin on his hands

Due to the prolonged course of the disease, the presence of the lichenification and the uncertainty about the diagnosis, a skin biopsy was performed which revealed an irregularity in the thickness of the surface epithelium with some surface hyperkeratosis and parakeratosis.

The underlying stroma showed mixed inflammatory cell infiltration with increased vascularity and edema.

The biopsy did not rule out the possibility of photo dermatitis or allergic contact dermatitis. Since the patient was not exposed to prolonged contact with any allergic substance, he was treated as having photodermatitis.

He was told to use SPF 60 and was started on hydroxychloroquine, 200 mg, daily. He was also started on a corticosteroid cream for his arms, twice daily. Mometasone furoate was recommended for use on his face.

It was planned for him to be reviewed after eight weeks and it was emphasized to him that he should

see an ophthalmologist every six months as long as he uses hydroxychloroquine.

After eight weeks, he is doing much better and continues to progress.

Actinic reticuloid is a chronic dermatosis of the face and neck that occurs as a response to exposure to light. There is a chronic dermatic process with erythema and scaling that evolves into plaques. Actinic reticuloid is extremely common in native individuals; however, the photo-sensitizing factor or factors have yet to be identified. It is a genetic disease and is most commonly found in individuals who are of Cree descent.

cme

**Dr. Kubba** graduated from the University of Baghdad, where he initially trained as a Trauma Surgeon. He moved to Britain, where he received his FRCS and worked as an Emergency Room Physician before specializing in Family Medicine. He is currently a Family Practitioner in rural Fort McMurray, Alberta.

**sanofi aventis**  
Because health matters

**ALTACE 10 mg**  
ramipril

Angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor  
Product Monograph available upon request.

sanofi-aventis Canada Inc.  
Laval, Quebec H7L 4A8  
CDN.RAM.06.02.02E