

“Is it skin cancer?”

By Benjamin Barankin, MD

A four-year-old boy presented to clinic with an orange-yellow plaque on his scalp (Figure 1). The area had a smooth surface and no follicular orifices were evident. The plaque had been present since just after birth. The child is otherwise healthy, and there is no family history of skin disease.

1. If this lesion is left untreated, what risks does the patient face?

- a) Spread of infection locally
- b) Development of a skin cancer within the lesion
- c) Alopecia totalis
- d) Extension of lesion to the dura mater
- e) Sepsis

2. What is the most likely diagnosis?

- a) Tinea capitis
- b) Alopecia areata
- c) Aplasia cutis congenita
- d) Nevus sebaceus
- e) Juvenile xanthogranuloma

3. How would you treat this lesion in this patient?


- a) Topical corticosteroids
- b) Topical antifungal
- c) Excise at the age of puberty
- d) Excise now
- e) Electrodesiccation and curettage 



Figure 1. Scalp of a four-year-old boy.

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Answers: 1-b; 2-d; 3-c