



Fiona's Fiery Tale

Simon Lee, MD, FRCPC

Fiona is a recent immigrant from Southeast Asia. Medical history reveals Hepatitis B carrier state and previous treatment for TB. She is otherwise in good health.

Unfortunately, Fiona injured her back while working in a garment factory. Fearing the loss of her job, she quickly sought the help of a traditional medicine doctor. During her last visit, she developed a painful eruption after treatment.

What's your diagnosis?

- a. Second-degree burn from fire cupping
- b. Erythema annulare centrifugum
- c. Granulome annulare
- d. Bullous pemphigoid
- e. Urticarial vasculitis

Answer: Second-degree burn from fire cupping

Classification of burns

There are several classification systems. The most common employs the following:

- First-degree burn (superficial): affects only the epidermis. The skin appears red and painful with absence of blisters
- Second-degree burn (partial thickness): involves the epidermis and part of the dermis. The burn site appears swollen and painful. Blisters are noted
- Third-degree burn (full thickness): full destruction of the epidermis and dermis with involvement of subcutaneous tissue



Figure 1. Fiona's painful eruptions.



Figure 1. Close-up of Fiona's painful eruption.

- Fourth-degree burn: there may also be underlying damage to the muscle or bone with loss of nerves

Treatment

The old dermatology adage applies with respect to management: "If it is wet, dry it. If it is dry, wet it." Therefore, a topical antibiotic cream may be applied to the oozing lesions. Non-adherent dressings should be used to cover lesions. Oral antibiotics may be required if there is evidence of spreading cellulitis. A bacterial swab may be helpful to guide choice of antibiotic.

Simple analgesics may be used for pain control. Finally, it is always important to ascertain tetanus status.

What's Your Dx?

Discussion

Fire cupping or simply cupping is an ancient form of traditional healing found in many parts of the world including:

- China
- Southeast Asia
- Eastern Europe
- Greece
- Middle East
- Mexico

In traditional Chinese medicine, application of a heated cup creates a vacuum on the skin when the cup cools down. The vacuum pulls the skin upwards, creating an acupuncture effect. The technique involves using lit rubbing alcohol or kerosene to heat the cup. Some practitioners also apply various mineral oils on the skin to provide better suction. Therefore, great care must be used to avoid inadvertent burns to the skin. Cupping treatment leaves purpuric plaques on the back which resolve over time.

Fire cupping is primarily used for musculoskeletal injuries, although proponents also treat respiratory conditions and even cancer. Advocates report beneficial effects including relaxation similar to massage therapy.

Hijama is an ancient Islamic form of bloodletting dating back to the times of the prophet Muhammad. A small incision is made on the skin prior to cupping in order to extract the blood from the skin.

Back to Fiona

Fiona made an uneventful recovery and went back to work. **Dx**

Resource

1. *Textbook of Dermatology*. Rook/Wilkinson/Ebling: Fifth Edition, 1992.

Dr. Lee is a Dermatologist, Richmond Hill, Ontario.



ACTONEL is indicated for the treatment and prevention of osteoporosis in postmenopausal women.

The full Product Monograph can be obtained by contacting Procter & Gamble Pharmaceuticals Canada, Inc. at 1-800-565-0814.

Marketed with:
sanofi-aventis Canada Inc.
Laval, Quebec H7L 4A8

Manufactured and Distributed by:
Procter & Gamble Pharmaceuticals Canada, Inc.
Toronto, Ontario M5W 1C5

Copyright © 2008 Procter & Gamble Pharmaceuticals Canada, Inc.
All rights reserved.

M77004-ALL8
CDN.RIS.08.02.07E



P&G
Pharmaceuticals

