



Fig. 1. Clinical picture of papulourticarial rash in 35-year-old restorer.

Professional's and non-professional's papular urticaria caused by *Scleroderma domesticum*

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Papular urticaria caused by *Scleroderma domesticum* more often occurs in antique dealers, restorers or other people in touch with old furniture infested by woodworms. We report 3 cases of patients affected by papular-urticarial pruritic rash on the trunk persisting for many months and not responding to common symptomatic treatments.

Case Report

We report 3 cases, 2 restorers in prolonged contact with wood because of their work and 1 retired woman living in a flat with old furniture. The 2 restorers were aged 35 and 67 years,



Fig. 2. *Scleroderma domesticum*.

the woman was 71 years-old. All of them were affected by papular erythematous lesions, dome-shaped, 0.5–1 cm in diameter, mainly localized on the trunk (Fig. 1), associated with pruritus, pin-prick pain, and general discomfort. These symptoms went on for many months and did not respond to the common treatments (systemic anti-histaminic, topical corticosteroid and anti-parasitic drugs). Standard laboratory investigations were negative.

The patients themselves were able to capture the small insects from an old chest of drawers (in the first and second case) and amid the sheets of an old bed (in the third case). Therefore, we identified the insect as *S. domesticum* (Fig. 2). Other subspecies of Scleroderminae, such as *Scleroderma brevicornis*, have been described as responsible for similar papular-urticarial rash (1).

As the patients were advised to take anti-epidemic measures against

woodworms, symptoms disappeared spontaneously in about 10 days, without relapses during the following 12 months.

Discussion

Papular urticaria caused by *S. domesticum* more often occurs in antique dealers, restorers, or whoever is in touch with old furniture infested by woodworms. Multiple small holes and fine dust on the floor and around the furniture are the most important signs of wood pest presence.

Scleroderma domesticum is an insect from *Bethylidae* family (*Hymenoptera* order), of lengthened form, smooth, and similar to small ants (3–4 mm long) (2). It is otherwise known as *Anobidi* (woodworms) predator because of its parasitism on larvae of wood pest.

The female of *S. domesticum* paralyzes the woodworms or their larvae by injecting a poison into the motorial gangliar station through a sting. After that, the *Scleroderma* leaves its eggs on the back of the paralyzed pest, providing them with a 'woodworms breakfast' for the opening time. The parasites leave the wood pest holes, mainly during spring and summer months, and sting people who come near affected wooden objects (3).

These stings cause a toxic exogenous dermatitis with urticarial pruritic rash, systematic symptoms such as asthenia and fever can be observed. Prognosis is good, although the diagnosis can be difficult; symptoms disappear in a few days once environmental prophylactic measures are taken (4).

In conclusion, this dermatozoonoses has to be considered as rare affection of the general population and as typical occupational dermatitis in restorers and old wood dealers.

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