Herpes Zoster and Diabetes Mellitus

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LETTERS TO EDITORS

We read with interest an article by Yoon et al. published in The Korean Journal of Pain [1]. This article describes a case of disseminated herpes zoster in immunocompetent elderly patient with previous medical history of diabetes mellitus. Although disseminated herpes zoster is common in the immunocompromised patient, it is a rare clinical finding in the immunocompetent patient. The reactivation of varicella–zoster virus (VZV) occurs with the decline of VZV–specific cell–mediated immunity. Studies have shown increased incidence of herpes zoster incidence in diabetic patients [2,3]. Furthermore, Okamoto et al. compared VZV–specific immunity of patients with diabetes mellitus and healthy individuals and found that patients with diabetes mellitus had significantly lower cell–mediated immunity to VZV than did healthy individuals [4]. They suggested that the increased risk for herpes zoster among patients with diabetes mellitus may be related to decreased VZV–specific cell–mediated immunity. Although more evidence is needed to find the exact mechanism by which diabetes mellitus affects VZV–specific cell–mediated immunity, physicians should be aware that diabetes mellitus may be a condition compromising the immune competency of the patient against VZV infection.

REFERENCES