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Images in Dermatology: Alopecia Areata in a 42-Year-Old Woman

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A 42-year-old woman presented to the dermatology clinic with sudden onset, asymptomatic patches of hair loss on her scalp that began approximately two weeks prior and gradually increased in size. She denied recent scalp trauma, chemical treatments, new hair products, or any prior episodes of similar hair loss. She also reported no associated itching, pain, or systemic illnesses, and her family history was unremarkable for hair or autoimmune conditions.

On examination, two well-defined, round to oval patches of non-scarring hair loss of 3-4 cm diameter, were found over temporo-parietal areas of her scalp with normal skin appearance and no signs of inflammation. The positive hair pull test at the edges of the patches indicated active hair loss, but the remaining scalp hair appeared healthy with no other areas affected. Dermoscopy revealed yellow dots, black dots, exclamation mark hairs, and regrowing pigtail hairs, supporting a diagnosis of alopecia areata.

Routine blood tests, including complete blood count and thyroid function, were normal, although autoimmune markers were not tested. The diagnosis of alopecia areata presenting with few patches was made based on clinical and dermoscopic findings. The patient was advised about the benign nature of the condition and started on monthly intralesional steroid injections and topical minoxidil application, along with counseling on the potential for spontaneous remission and the chronic, relapsing course of alopecia areata. Patient returned for follow-up after one month with significant improvement.

Overall, alopecia areata is an autoimmune, non-scarring hair loss disorder that can affect individuals of any age, characterized by well-defined patches, with immune-mediated attack on hair follicles. Diagnosis is made clinically and dermoscopy can aid in diagnosis. It can be managed by immunomodulatory therapies aimed at promoting hair regrowth.



Image 1a: Hairless patch over scalp



Image 1b: Hairless patch over scalp



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Figure 2: Exclamation mark hairs (red arrows) on dermoscopy

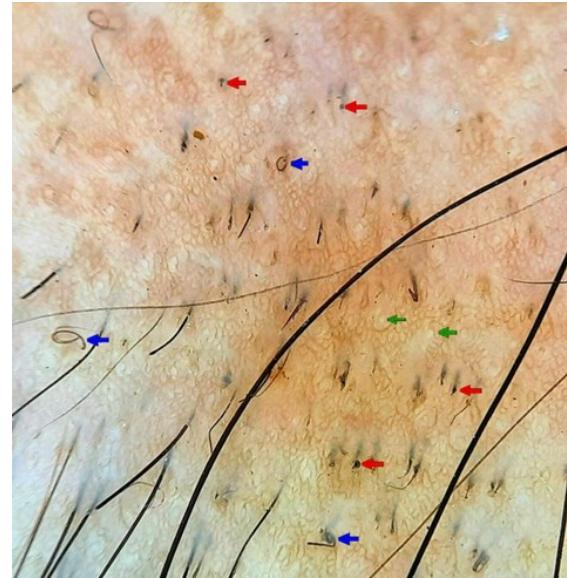


Figure 3: Black dots (red arrows), yellow dots (green arrows), regrowing pigtail hairs (blue arrows) on dermoscopy

Declaration of patient consent:

Appropriate patient consent was obtained by the authors for taking and sharing pictures.



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