

TUBERCULOID LEPROSY AT THE SITE OF A DOG BITE

Sir,

Although it is well known that skin lesions of sarcoidosis sometimes appear in and around scars ('scar sarcoidosis'), it is less well known that skin lesions of leprosy may originate in scars. Leprosy workers seem to have made little note of this interesting phenomenon, if reports in the literature are any criterion, and the only published photograph with which I am acquainted is given in Jopling & Harman¹ in which a lesion of tuberculoid leprosy is shown involving 3 vaccination

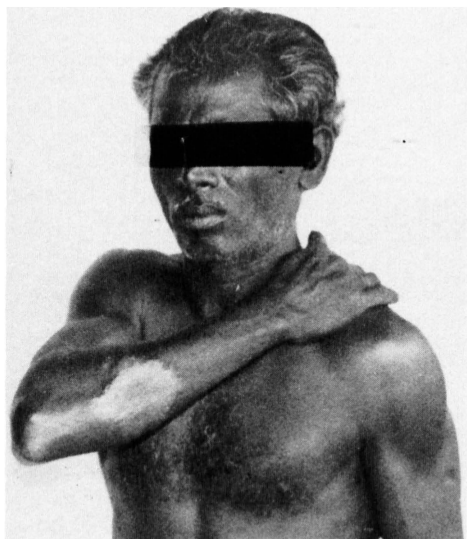


Figure 1

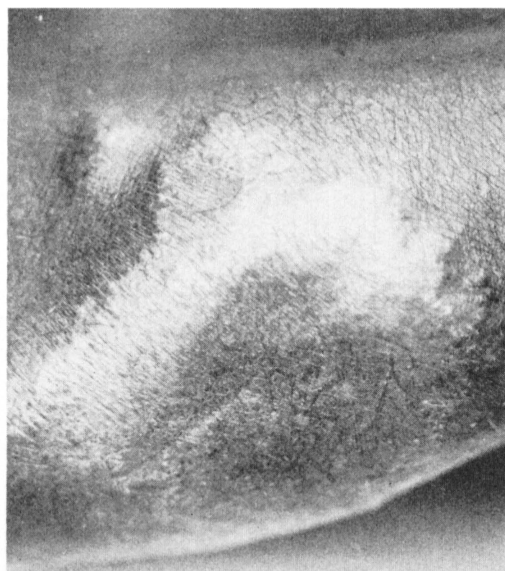


Figure 2

scars. These authors state: 'leprosy lesions of all types tend to surround scars'. My interest in this subject has been aroused by the following case history:

A 45-year-old male reported at the Skin Clinic of the Western Railway Hospital, Bombay, with a hypopigmented skin lesion on the dorsum of his right forearm. The lesion measured 4×4 in., was flat in the centre and raised at the periphery, was anaesthetic and virtually hairless although situated in a hairy region of skin (Figures 1 and 2). No AFB were found in skin smears, and histology was diagnostic of tuberculoid leprosy. The patient stated that he had been bitten on that same forearm by a street dog 4 years ago, and the skin lesion appeared 6 months ago as a hypopigmented patch in the scar, subsequently enlarging to its present size. On examination, the scar could be seen in the central region of the lesion (Figure 2).

As leprosy has never been described in dogs, the question of *Mycobacterium leprae* having been introduced into the patient's skin does not arise, but there is a distinct possibility that at some time in the future a case of leprosy resulting from animal bite may be reported. I have in mind the report of Lumpkin *et al.*² on leprosy developing in 5 native-born Texans who handled wild armadillos, added to the fact that naturally-acquired leprosy has been found in the chimpanzee and the Mangabey monkey.

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References

- ¹ Jopling WH, Harman RRM. Leprosy. In: Rook A, Wilkinson DS, Ebling FJG, eds. *Textbook of Dermatology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1979: 749–65.
- ² Lumpkin LR, Cox GF, Wolf JE. Leprosy in five armadillo handlers. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 1983: 899–903.