

RAPID HEALING OF A CHRONIC WOUND SURROUNDED BY HYPERKERATOSIS IN A LEPROSY PATIENT AFTER HYDROCOLLOID OCCLUSIVE DRESSING

Sir,

One of the commonest problems in the care of leprosy patients is the treatment of chronic wounds originating as small skin injuries or burns. In leprosy patients, a characteristic form of wound healing often occurs, which leads to the development of a chronic wound with incomplete epithelization surrounded by hyperkeratosis. Since leprosy patients have sensory loss caused by peripheral nerve involvement, infection of wounds sometimes leads to serious inflammation which often goes unnoticed.

A 69-year-old male lepromatous leprosy patient had a chronic wound on his thumb for 10 years. The wound was an ulcerative lesion with surrounding hyperkeratosis, appearing like tylosis or warts (Figure 1(a)). Although conventional treatment such as topical use of ointments or the removal of hyperkeratosis was not effective, the lesion was rapidly healed by hydrocolloid occlusive dressing (DuoDerm). This dressing, changed every 7 days, is a compound of gelatin, pectin, carboxymethylcellulose sodium and polyisobutylene; 1 week after the start of the treatment, incomplete epithelization was observed on the surface of the ulcerative lesion, and in the following week, the surrounding hyperkeratosis showed slight collapse. Epithelization was completed and the surface of the whole lesion became flat and smooth within 1 month (Figure 1(b)).

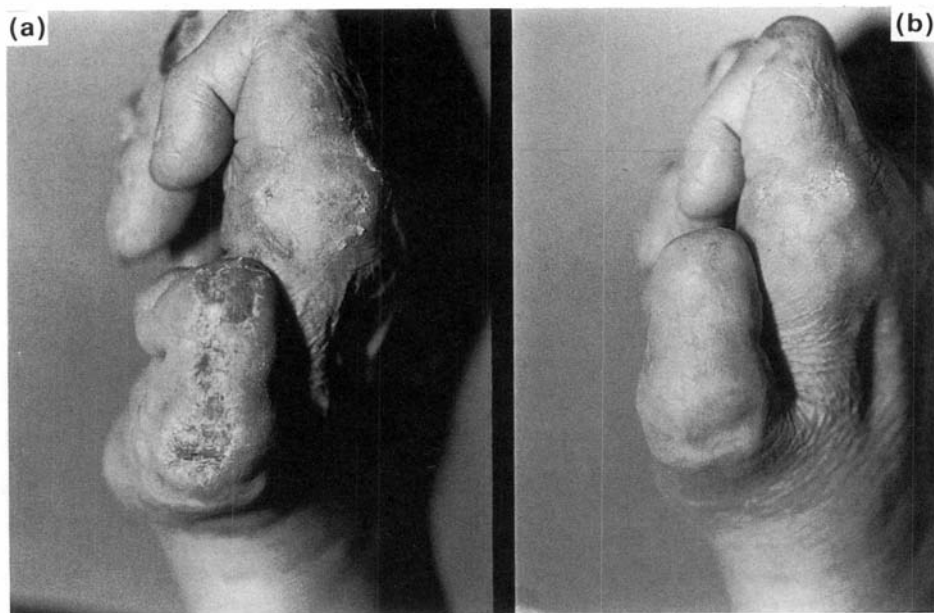


Figure 1.

The precise mechanism of wound healing by occlusive dressing is unclear, but it is thought that the environment of the wound is modified to a condition conducive for wound healing.¹⁻³ Although

follow-up of this patient showed that scratches on the healed surface could cause skin roughness again, this simple dressing treatment may prove extremely valuable for the healing of chronic wounds in leprosy patients.

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