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CUTANEOUS INOCULATION OF NONTUBERCULOUS MYCOBACTERIA DURING PROFESSIONAL TATTOOING

Charlotte Hurabielle¹, Antoine Petit¹, Nicolas Kluger², Jacqueline Rivet¹, Eric Caumes³, Stéphanie Régnier³

¹Hôpital Saint Louis; (Paris, France); ²Helsinki University Central Hospital; (Helsinki, Finland); ³Hôpital Pitié-Salpêtrière; (Paris, France).

Nontuberculous Mycobacterias (NTM), in particular *M. chelonae*, have been recognized responsible of outbreak after tattooing process. We report 2 cases illustrating the need for enhanced due diligence measures in addition to existing strict legislation concerning tattooing.

Observations:

Case 1: a 29 year-old breast-feeding woman, consulted for a rash on a tattoo she received 2 weeks before, which worsened after a second session. More than 100 small erythematous papules were observed on the tattoo area, restricted to the diluted black ink (gray wash) area and the red-figures, beforehand spotted by diluted black ink. Histopathological examination and culture of a biopsy specimen confirmed the presence of *M. chelonae*. Spontaneous recovery was observed.

Case 2: a 23 year-old man consulted with a rash localized on the diluted black ink area that appeared 1 week after the tattoo session. Histopathological examination of a biopsy specimen suspected the presence of Mycobacteria (Zielh +). Culture was negative. A one-month treatment with chlarythromycine failed. A culture of a second biopsy specimen was still negative. Then the patient healed spontaneously about 6 weeks after tattooing.

Discussion: Those cases are interesting because they occurred despite the local regulation for tattooist to be trained in hygiene and asepsis. In the first case, we brought to light the fact that the tattooist didn't apply the rules of his office, using a bottle of water already opened for the dilution instead of a single dose boule of sterile water. Thus, we didn't observed any contamination of sealed-stock bottles (of black ink) as it was suspected in a recent epidemic in the USA. Here, the contamination source was probably the bottle of non sterile water used to dilute black ink, as classically described.

Conclusion: Because of the expansion of ornamental tattoo practice, it seems important to remind tattooists about use of single dose of sterile water to dilute the ink, to prevent those events. It seems also careful to prevent pregnant or breast feeding women from tattooing.