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PERMANENT MAKEUP AND RISK OF HERPES VIRUS INFECTION

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Aim: Lips are predisposed to herpes simplex virus (HSV). Some cosmeticians advise their clients to take oral acyclovir before and during lip tattooing, seemingly because the profession has experienced problem cases not reported or known in the medical community.

Methods: A 46-year-old woman with a 5-year-history of recurrent herpes labialis, usually provoked by throat infections, was admitted with a severe outbreak 2 days after having her lip lines tattooed with black-brown ink. Simultaneously, artificial eyebrows and eye lines were tattooed. Her medical history included no dermatological disease except for recurrent herpes. On this occasion she had no preceding throat infection or other symptoms.

Results: Typical herpes vesicles and crusts along the lip lines were seen. Also, the perioral skin was affected with marked swelling of the lips and the face including widespread redness. A few vesicles were noted in the glabella. Eyes were unaffected without any sign of keratitis.

Her general condition deteriorated with pain albeit without fever. Treatment was oral acyclovir with recovery in 4 weeks. The tattooed eyebrows and eye lines presented no herpetic eruption.

Conclusions: This severe attack of HSV, detected by real time PCR, was clearly provoked by lip tattooing, a risk not recognized generally; although, cosmeticians apparently are aware of it.

HSV may propagate systemically, with internal organ complications and disseminate in the skin into a widespread life-threatening infection known as eczema herpeticum/ Kaposi's varicelliform eruption. Prophylactic treatment with acyclovir before tattooing of the lips is of utmost importance in persons having known risk factors.