

Pre-Dorsal Myxedema: A Rare Unique Manifestation of Hypothyroidism in an Egyptian Female Patient

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A 45 years old female patient came to my clinic wishing to lose some weight (90 Kg; 163 cm height). Upon history taking I've realized that she's not eating extra calories to explain this weight gain and she's not living a sedentary life. Upon examination, I've noticed the three years old bilateral dorsal leg non-pitting swelling (Figure 1) to which she heard multiple diagnoses e.g. suspected elephantiasis and a post cholecystectomy complication! She's been given diuretics to relieve this swelling in vain. I've suspected a thyroid gland disorder and she's described chronic and easy fatigability, dyspnea on moderate exertion, somnolence while her ECG was within normal limits. I've asked for thyroid profile and the lab results were very particular. Severe hypothyroidism was revealed (TSH > 150 mIU/ml; Free T₃ 0.5 pg/ml; Free T₄ 0.2 ng/dl) As a physician as well as a pharmacologist, I've seen some cases with the famous pretibial myxedema which was referenced to occur in 4.3% of patients with Graves's disease mainly in the pretibial areas as well as on the dorsum of the foot [1]. Further, rare presentation of myxedema of the hand, elbow, arm, and forearm were referenced and even a 4 years old non-pitting edema of the toe with no involvement of the pretibial portion was described before [2]. However, the term myxedema has been also used to refer to the thickened, nonpitting edematous changes to the soft tissues of patients in a markedly hypothyroid state. To the best of my knowledge, this case is the first localized pre-dorsal foot myxedema to be described with hypothyroidism; the patient didn't describe any symptoms to suggest previous hyperthyroidism. I've prescribed the generic T₄ commercially available in Egypt and I've increased the dose gradually over two weeks to 150 mg/day; dramatic decrease in the left leg dorsal swelling was noticed at the end of the first week (Figure 2) though I've told the patient that the swelling may take months to decrease, if ever decreased! All the symptoms of hypothyroidism have also improved dramatically improving the quality of life of the patient and she experienced a 3 Kg weight loss in ten days and she's feeling great.



Figure 1 and 2: Pre-dorsal myxedema before and after 1 week of thyroid hormone administration.

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