Ainhum (Dactylolysis Spontanea): A Rare Cause of Consult in Dermatology- A Case Report and Review of Literature

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Received: December 19, 2016; Accepted: January 16, 2017; Published: January 19, 2017

Abstract
Ainhum or Dactylolysis Spontanea is an idiopathic condition due to constriction rings or grooves on the digits that result in auto amputation. The ainhum commonly affects the fifth toe and usually the compromise is bilateral. This disease affects mainly African American adults between 20 to 50 years old from tropical and sub-tropical regions. We report a 75 years-old man with clinical and radiographic findings of unilateral ainhum of left fifth toe.

Keywords: Ainhum; Amputation; Dactylolysis spontanea

Introduction
The term ainhum or Dactylolysis Spontanea was used for first time by da Silva Lima in 1867 [1,2]. It is believed that the word “ainhum” derives from the Brazilian word “Nago” meaning ‘fissure’ or the Nigerian word “Yoruba” meaning ‘to saw’ [1]. This condition is a rare cause of consult in dermatology due to the low prevalence; however, the ainhum represents a term of confusion with its counterpart pseudo-ainhum. Ainhum or Dactylolysis Spontanea is used for describe African or African descendent patients with a clinical history of a groove or fissure of constricting tissue around the proximal end of the digits that affects mainly the fifth toe [1]. Meanwhile, pseudo-ainhum is any case of auto-amputation independent of race that may classify in two spectra ‘primary pseudo-ainhum’ or ‘secondary pseudo-ainhum’ depending the age of presentation and the associated conditions [2]. We report an African American descendent adult with clinical history consisting with classic ainhum or Dactylolysis Spontanea.

Case Presentation
A 75 years old African descendent male from Tumaco, Colombia, is presented to our clinic with a history of 1 year of a groove on the left fifth toe associated to pain and disability. The patient has history of arterial hypertension controlled. On physical examination is observed a constrictive band on the distal phalange of left fifth toe (Figure 1). A skin biopsy was performed with evidence of dermis fibrosis without findings suggested active localized scleroderma. Autoimmune profile was unremarkable, VDRL titers were no reactive and Hansen’s disease was ruled out. Radiographs showed evidence of a constricting band in the middle of proximal phalanx of fifth left toe associated with thinning of bone consisting with ainhum grade III. Figure 2 a surgical management by orthopedic surgery was performed. The pain and discomfort was improved without any important disability posterior to the distal amputation of affected digit.

Discussion
Ainhum or Dactylolysis Spontanea (DS) is an idiopathic disease caused by a circular fibrotic constrictive band affecting the digits that result in progressive ischemia and auto amputation [3]. Ainhum may affect any hand fingers [4] or toes [5], commonly the affected digit is the fifth toe and usually this compromise is bilateral [3]. The affected population is African descendent individuals between 20 to 79 years old with a mean age of 52 years [6]. Few cases are reported on seventies like this case. The men are affected more frequently than

Figure 1: Physical examination showed a constrictive band on the distal phalange of left fifth toe.

Figure 2: Patient’s foot (A), and it’s oblique (B) and frontal (C) x ray views. The constrictive band is seen as a narrowing of the soft tissue in the proximal phalanx (black arrow in A and B). The bone compromise is evident as a thinning of the diaphysis compared with the other phalanxes (white arrowhead in C).
female with a relation of 2:1, and more prevalent in individuals on barefoot [7]. Ainhum has higher incidence in tropical and subtropical areas among of 0.015% to 3% [3]. In Colombia, there are few reports published, three cases has been reported by Uribe in 1940 and Vélez in 1992 [8], this is the fourth Colombian case reported. However, the incidence and prevalence in Latin America is still undetermined [4]. In United States, Deccaret et al. [6] reported a prevalence of 1.7% cases of DS in a 6000 African American descendants from Chicago.

The etiology of ainhum is unknown; however, it has related with genetic, infectious, mechanical or inflammatory factors [3,4]. It is believed that ainhum is a skin disorder produced due to a genetic predisposition and fibroplasia that result in a progressive constrictive band as a response to external stimuli such as trauma and infections mainly syphils and Hansen’s disease, these last ruled out in our patient [6]. However, in the ‘true ainhum’ there is not a real cause associated with the development of circular fibrosis. The histology findings are hyperkeratosis and acanthosis with increase of fibroblasts in the dermis as a response to tissue damage and chronic inflammation [1]. The constrictive band acts as a scar forming a ligature around the toe, this causes a localized anoxia and necrosis that restarts the wound repair process and exacerbates the fibrosis [1]. Hypertension is the most frequent comorbidity associated (like this case) followed by diabetes and peripheric vascular disease [6]. The main differential diagnosis is with pseudo-ainhum, an auto-amputation of the digits on Table 1. Z-plasty surgical procedure, prevention of trauma, and avoidance of ill-fitting shoes is reserved for patients with ainhum stages I or II [6]. Intralesional steroids, salicylate preparations, and retinoid have been used in early stages [3,7,10]. The prognosis for saving the toe is poor when changes in the bone has observed, like this case, where the surgical amputation is a good alternative to reduce discomfort [6]. Auto-amputation, secondary infections and locomotor imbalance occur in complicate ainhum [3].

We report a case of patient with ainhum, a rare cause of consult in dermatology but with high importance to the early detection and effective preventive treatment for avoiding auto-amputation in these patients.

References