

A Juvenile Conundrum

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INTRODUCTION:

Scurvy is becoming more prevalent in a niche group of individuals; children with autism.^[1] Presenting with musculoskeletal symptoms, majority of cases are referred to Orthopaedics with diagnosis such as septic arthritis due to the resembling symptoms. The following report details a case encountered in our practice.

REPORT:

An 8 year-old boy with underlying autism presented with bilateral limping gait, loss of weight and gum bleeding for 1 month. His mother denies recent trauma, fall and fever. Further history reveals patient is a picky eater who only takes certain vegetables and does not eat fruits.

Examination revealed tenderness over bilateral hips and were maintained in flexed position due to pain. The patient was also noted to have gingivitis, follicular hyperkeratosis and corkscrew hair.(Figure 1)

Blood investigations including full blood picture were unremarkable while ultrasound scan of bilateral hips was normal.

Plain radiograph showed Pelkan spurs, Trummerfeld zone, white line of Fraenkel and pencil thin cortex whereas the pelvic xray showed normal hips.(Figure 2)

The patient was discharged a week later as the symptoms resolved with oral ascorbic acid. Following treatment, patient returned to pre-morbid condition with complete resolution of symptoms as noted during subsequent follow up.



Figure 1: Clinical features of scurvy

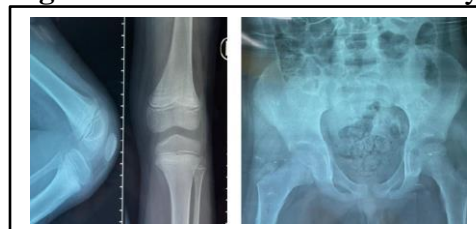


Figure 2: Xray of left knee showing scurvy features. Normal pelvis xray.

Scurvy is caused by deficiency in dietary ascorbic acid more commonly seen in children with restrictive diets. It is commonly mistaken with diagnoses such as septic arthritis and transient synovitis due to similar symptoms which may lead to unnecessary surgery. Hence a detailed history taking is vital as quick treatment will provide complete resolution of symptoms.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, clinicians should maintain a high index of suspicion and conduct thorough history taking and examination so as not to miss the diagnosis of scurvy.

REFERENCES:

1. Chalouhi C, Nicolas N, Vegas N, et al. Scurvy: A New Old Cause of Skeletal Pain in Young Children. *Front Pediatr.* 2020;8:8. Published 2020 Jan 31. doi:10.3389/fped.2020.00008