Interesting Paediatric Ophthalmology Case of Giant Hogweed Periorbital Burn

Dr Ryan Teo, Ms Leticia Dujardin
Royal Eye Infirmary, Derriford Hospital

(1) History / Background

The patient is a 5 year old Caucasian boy who was referred to Ophthalmology by Paediatrics and he presented with a 1 day history of unilateral vesicular painful periorbital rash around his left eye and on his left forehead.

The characteristics and pattern of the rash suggested it could be Left-Sided Herpes Zoster Ophthalmicus.

But after further detailed history taking, it was ascertained that the most likely cause of the rash was Giant Hogweed Burns due to the patient's face coming into contact with the toxic plant sap.

(2) Clinical Findings

His visual acuity, anterior segment and posterior segment examinations were normal.

Initial swabs taken from the ruptured vesicles were negative for virus and bacteria.

Subsequently, more in-depth and detailed history was obtained from the patient's father, which revealed that the patient had been playing outdoors and rolling around in a grass field with Giant Hogweed Plants on the same day before the facial lesions started.

(3) Management

Brief literature review showed there was no documented case report of periorbital burns from Giant Hogweed Plants.

The case was discussed with the Consultant Paediatric Ophthalmologist and then referred for onward discussion with the Paediatrics Team for further dermatological opinion. The patient was commenced on steroid cream.

(4) Results / Outcome

The patient was scheduled a follow-up in Paediatric Ophthalmology Clinic in 2 to 4 weeks to monitor his progress.

Phone consultation with his parents 4 weeks later revealed that the facial rash resolved with steroid cream treatment.



Figure 1: Giant Hogweed Plant



Figure 2: Periorbital rash from toxic sap (Day 2)



Figure 3: Periorbital rash from toxic sap (Day 10)



Figure 4: Giant Hogweed Plant seen in field in England



Figure 5: Close Up of Giant Hogweed



Figure 6: Periorbital rash from toxic sap (Day 11)



Figure 7: Ruptured vesicular lesion near medical canthus

(6) Conclusion

This is a very fascinating case report as facial and periocular lesions caused by Giant Hogweed Burns are not commonly encountered in an ophthalmology setting.

Although clinical suspicion points towards a herpes zoster ophthalmicus or herpes simplex rash, this case reminds us that a unilateral vesicular facial and periocular rash can also be caused by contact dermatitis from skin exposure to an irritant.

A key learning point is that Giant Hogweeds are relatively common in the British outdoors and their toxic sap can cause severe skin rashes, burning blisters and long-lasting scars.

The treatment is to wash it off immediately with soap and water upon contact and sunlight should be avoided due to photosensitivity induced by the Giant Hogweed Burn. If the sap has entered the eye, please contact an ophthalmologist immediately. For serious skin inflammation, steroid creams are effective and for superficial burns, lotion or aloe vera can be applied.

(7) References

1. Woodland Trust, H.K. (2022) *Giant Hogweed: The Facts*, *Woodland Trust*. Available at: https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2022/06/giant-hogweed-facts/ (Accessed: 08 September 2024).

2. Durham, T. (2024) *Treating giant hogweed burns*. Available at: https://firstaidtrainingcooperative.co.uk/treatment-following-contact-with-giant-hogweed/ (Accessed: 08 September 2024).

3. Goldman, R. (2018) *Hogweed burns: How to avoid Giant Hogweed and treat Burns*, *Healthline*. Available at: https://www.healthline.com/health/hogweed-burns (Accessed: 08 September 2024).

Consent was obtained from the patient's parents for the photos to be used for the intents and purposes of this poster. They are not to be replicated or distributed for any other means.