Neonatal Purpura Fulminans

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The Case

A preterm baby of 32 weeks gestation, weight 1.5 kg was admitted for respiratory difficulty. At age of 3 days baby had skin necrosis of both lower limbs and upper limb with disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC) and Klebsiella septicaemia. Baby had deranged blood coagulation profile. The infant died at age of five days due to multi-organ system failure despite aggressive neonatal intensive care support.

Neonatal purpura fulminans is a rare, life-threatening condition of dermal microvascular thrombosis associated with DIC and perivascular hemorrhage in the newborn period associated with high morbidity and mortality¹. Gram negative organisms and Staphylococcus species are the most common causes of the acute infectious type². It may be congenital, as a result of protein C and S deficiency, or acquired due to severe infection. It is characterized by the rapid spread of symmetrical, bluish-black hemorrhages into the skin, affecting mainly the extensor surfaces of the extremities and showing a tendency to deep necrosis and the formation of serosanguineous bullae. The haemorrhagic areas are well defined and are surrounded by oedema. These lesions are accompanied by a high fever and intense systemic symptoms³.