



## PECULIAR CASE OF PHTHIRIASIS PALPEBRARUM

## Ophthalmology

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## ABSTRACT

A 19-year-old man presented to our Ophthalmology Outpatient department with one week history of itching, tearing, redness, irritation, and crusting in both eyes. On examination, vision was 6/6 in both eyes. Slit-lamp examination revealed numerous translucent grey-coloured nits adherent to the lid margins near the roots of the cilia in both eyelids and mild conjunctival hyperaemia was noted. All the nits and lice along with the root of eyelashes were removed with epilation forceps. The pubis and inguinal regions were also examined where no signs of lice infestation were noted. **Conclusion:** Phthiriasis palpebrarum is an uncommon condition of pruritis. Our case highlights bilateral phthiriasis palpebrarum infestation in the young age group. Meticulous examination under slit lamp is essential for the prompt diagnosis and treatment of phthiriasis palpebrarum.

## KEYWORDS

Phthiriasis palpebrarum, cilia, lid margins

## INTRODUCTION

Phthiriasis palpebrarum is a rare eyelid infestation caused by *Phthiriasis pubis*, commonly known as crab lice. Although their primary habitat is pubic hair, these lice are often found on the hair of the abdomen, thighs and the axilla, and occasionally they may invade the eyebrows and eyelashes.

Lice may be transferred from one hair-bearing area to another, and any hair-bearing area may become infested. Sexual contact and parent-child interactions are the most typical routes of infestation and transfer occurs more often in this manner than through shared towels, sheets or clothes. Phthiriasis pubis infestation affects 1–2% of the human population worldwide and is generally associated with poor hygiene and overcrowding. Infestations are most prevalent in sexually active patients from 15 to 45 years old

## Case History

A 19-year-old man presented to our Ophthalmology Outpatient department with one week history of itching, tearing, redness, irritation, and crusting in both eyes.

On examination, vision was 6/6 in both eyes. Slit-lamp examination revealed numerous translucent grey-coloured nits adherent to the lid margins near the roots of the cilia in both eyelids and mild conjunctival hyperaemia was noted.

Rest of the anterior segment findings were found to be within normal limits.

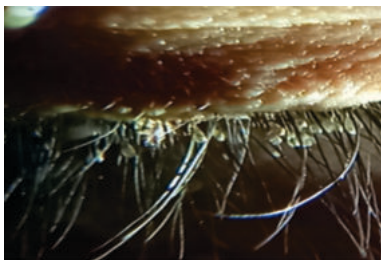


Fig.1: Right eye

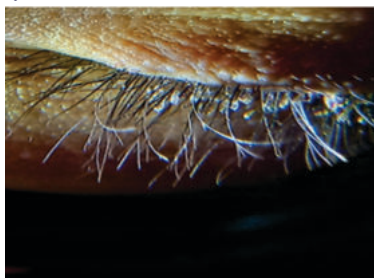


Fig.2: Left eye

## RESULTS

All the nits and lice along with the root of eyelashes were removed with epilation forceps. Antibiotic and Lubricating eye drops were prescribed for a week.

Dermatology opinion was sought for the same for which patient was advised 1% permethrin rinse once weekly for two weeks and topical petroleum jelly (Vaseline) application twice daily.

All clothes and bedsheets advised to be washed in hot water and sundried. The pubis and inguinal regions were also examined where no signs of lice infestation were noted.

The patient was followed up regularly for 3 weeks. At the follow up examination the patient's symptoms had subsided completely.

## DISCUSSION

Phthiriasis palpebrarum is characterized by infestation of the eyelashes with *Phthirus pubis*, which is classed as an STD.

Phthiriasis palpebrarum is uncommon in developed countries and typically presents in patients with poor personal hygiene.

In heavy infestations, lice are found in the hair of the axilla, chest, eyebrows and eyelashes.

Patients with phthiriasis palpebrarum typically present with palpebral pruritis, conjunctival inflammation, and occasionally preauricular lymphadenopathy due to secondary infection at the site of the louse bites.

There are multiple treatment options available, including mechanical removal with forceps, trimming of the eyelashes, fluorescein eye drops 20%, physostigmine 25%, yellow mercuric oxide ointment 1%, pilocarpine gel and oral ivermectin.

Mechanical removal has been demonstrated to be effective in treating the disease and preventing recurrence.

The clothing, towels and bedding used by the patient should be washed at  $\geq 50^{\circ}\text{C}$  within 2–3 days of treatment and dried on the hot cycle for 5–10 min.

Due to the ease of transference, if the parasite is detected in one patient, then all members of the household and contacts should be examined.

## CONCLUSIONS

Phthiriasis palpebrarum is an uncommon condition of pruritis. Our case highlights bilateral phthiriasis palpebrarum infestation in the young age group.

Meticulous examination under slit lamp is essential for the prompt diagnosis and treatment of phthiriasis palpebrarum.

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