Significance of Polythelia

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The case report by Cellini and Offidani [1] on 'Familial supernumerary nipples and breasts' [1] suggests some comments on the genetic background.

Polythelia does not only offer a clue for mammo-renal syndromes but also for individual or familial alcoholism. Polythelia may be part of fetal alcohol syndrome if the addiction is on the mother's side. It is generally more frequent among alcoholics. König et al. [2] in a study comparing several groups of patients found supernumerary nipples in 6.6% in chronic alcoholics (n = 350), in 0.8-1.4% of unselected controls, in 0.92% in patients with miscellaneous psychiatric diseases unrelated to alcohol intake (n = 761) and in 6.5% of patients with alcohol-related psychiatric disorders (n = 690). Familial alcoholism or alcohol-proneness may be another background of supernumerary nipples.

References

Cellini A, Offidani A: Familial supernumerary nipples and breasts. *Dermatology* 1992;185: 56-58.

König P, Haller R, Dünser H: Polythelie bei Alkoholkranken. *Wien Med Wochenschr* 1985; 18:443-446.

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Reply

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We read with great interest Prof. Grosshans' note regarding our latest report about 'Familial supernumerary nipples and breasts' [1]. While we agree that polythelia might be a marker for either a mammo-renal syndrome [2] or personal and familial alcoholism [3], this was not the case in the family we reported.

References

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Meggyessy V, Mehes K: Association of supernumerary nipples with renal anomalies. *1 Pediatr* 1987;111:412-413. König P, Haller R, Dünser H: Polythelie bei Alkoholkranken. *Wien Med Wochenschr* 1985; 18:443-446.

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