To the Editor

I read with interest the case report of Taieb et al. (Dennatologica 1988:176:76-82) on an infant born with eyelid synechiae and areas of erosions on the skin and a cleft palate, which only now came to my attention.

I believe this infant fits into the syndrome of AEC (ankyloblepharon filiforme adnatum, ectodermal dysplasia and cleft lip ± cleft palate). The most characteristic features of this disorder are the adhesions between the eyelids and the clefting defect. In 2 infants with this disorder (also known as Hay-Wells syndrome) we have seen marked erosive changes of the skin which very soon after birth go on to heal. In the second of 2 infants under our care with this condition, a colloidian membrane was present and peeled at birth leaving areas of erosions. The low-set and unusual ears were also present in both of our patients. The thickening of the stratum corneum is also typical.

In summary, I believe that this infant has a recognized autosomal dominant disorder and there is a very low recurrence risk. The cleft palate is part of the disorder and not a fortuitous event.

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The diagnostic proposal of Dr. Sybert for our case published 3 years ago is most probably right. When reviewing photographs published in previous reports [1-3], there are indeed striking fades similarities. At the time of our report, we were mostly concerned by skin fragility and widespread erosions, which had not been noted previously in AEC syndrome. The case was isolated, and the patient died at 3 days of life, increasing diagnostic difficulties. Epidermolysis bullosa was the diagnostic proposal, and electron-microscopic studies were consistent with this hypothesis. Clinical slides and histologic sections were circulated, and the case was presented at the World Congress in Berlin in 1987 before a decision of publication was made.
Finally, it should be stressed that AEC syndrome must be added to the list of differential diagnoses in congenital epidermolysis bullosa and that this diagnosis can be made (now quite easily!) on the basis of associated symblepharon, cleft palate and typical facies.

References

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