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Oral Pathology

Geographic Tongue

In dentistry, there are many different conditions that can occur in the mouth. These conditions can be short term to chronic, and can be harmful or not. In order to understand how to identify certain conditions, it’s best to know about symptoms, causes, and treatment. One condition that occurs in the mouth is called Geographic Tongue.

The Geographic Tongue, which was first discovered by Rayer in 1831, is a chronic, and recurring inflammatory condition of the oral cavity. Other names it can be referred to as are benign migratory glossitis, annulus migrans, and a wandering rash of the tongue. Most of the time, it begins as asymptomatic erythematous.

The etiology of the geographic tongue is still unknown. Although, a few theories have been mentioned. One theory is that psychosomatic and hereditary factors could have had a factor in the etiology of the geographic tongue. It was also noted that the geographic tongue was found more so in mentally ill patients. It usually only effects one to two and a half percent of the population and also seen with Fissured Tongue. The condition is also seen most in patients ranging between the ages of 20 and 29 years old, with the percentage being about 39.4%. It’s also more prevalent for women than men.

In a clinical setting, clinicians are able to identify the geographic tongue by observing the signs and symptoms. First, we can see its location on the dorm and lateral surfaces of the tongue and lesions also may affect the ventral surface. We are also able to recognize it by its red patchy areas of desquamated filiform papillae, red patchy desquamated areas surrounded by raised, white lines, and red patchy areas of desquamated filiform papillae with or without the encircling white lines, bordered by an erythematous band of inflammation. A combination of these patterns could be present and may continuously change, which is why the term migratory glossitis is used. From a patient standpoint, the way to know it’s a Geographic Tongue is if the patient tells you they have irritation from spicy foods and acidic foods. The patients may also be sensitive to any alcoholic-based mouth rinses. To help better identify the condition, it’s important to know that it can effect anyone at any age, including children. It is also important to note that sex and race are irrelevant with this condition.

When observing from a biopsy, it looks similar to the condition psoriasis and is also seen in patients that have psoriasis as well. Microscopically, psoriasis and Geographic tongue are considered identical. It’s also worth nothing that if you have Geographic Tongue, it does not mean you will get psoriasis.

This condition does not require any treatment. It’s only suggested to avoid acidic and spicy foods as it can be painful and cause irritation. When healing, the prognosis is considered to be good but recurrences are expected.

When it comes to dental hygiene care, it’s best to advise the patient to avoid any alcoholic based mouth rinses. As mentioned above, these rinses can cause pain or irritation to the patient. All other normal dental hygiene care can continue, and it’s best to reassure the patient that the condition has good prognosis but may reoccur.

Understanding the different conditions that can be associated in the oral cavity is important. It will allow us as clinicians to provide the appropriate dental hygiene care for our patients. In this specific condition of the Geographic Tongue, we are able to know that it creates sensitivity and irritation to acidic and spicy foods. So, when creating a hygiene plan for patients with this condition, we can make sure to let them know that any alcoholic based rinses are best to be avoided.

Reference Page

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