Symptoms and Signs/Obsolete/Evergreen/New
Two Diseases which are Missed Because of Application of Ointment or Skin Lotion or Administration of Any Drug

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I am reminded of two illnesses, where the diagnosis, is often missed by the clinicians.

1. Herpes Zoster is notoriously difficult to diagnose unless specially thought of. If 2-3 or more dermatomes are affected, the pain will be felt in the neck and shoulder, precordium, Rt. hypochondrium or Lt. loin, over the areas of heart, liver, kidney and the clinician is tempted to diagnose illnesses related to the above organs. Remember that the pain is of burning type and more superficial, so that even touching the patient on that area is disliked by him. During the period of 3-4 days, before the rash appears, a little redness and occasional vesicle can appear before the actual rash appears. The patient starts using some cream or lotion on the skin and the patient and the doctor are tempted to blame the ointment or the lotion for the redness and occasional vesicle, as an allergic reaction. Do not fall in this trap. Make a diagnosis of Herpes Zoster by noticing appearance of red areas and a few vesicles (before the final rash appears), which may be found, for example, in the area of cervical roots (initially cervical spondylosis might have been blamed).

2. I am also reminded of the disease Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) in young female patients. The patients present with vague feverishness, polyarthralgia especially of the small joints and the fingers (with no definite distribution like rheumatoid arthritis), symptoms of Raynaud’s phenomenon (which should be elicited), excessive loss of hair, (though loss of hair is common in normal population, it is not in excess) or ulcers in the mouth. Some systemic involvement of pleura, pericardium, peritoneum, brain, liver or kidney etc is also present. The sign, which may help the diagnosis, could be skin rash- rash of butterfly shape on the face or there could be a generalized rash, which was attributed by the previous physician as a drug rash.

Reference