Alopecia Areata

Alopecia Areata is a common dermatosis associated with **non-scarring** hair loss.

Higher rates reported among children from Asian, Black, and Hispanic backgrounds.

Reported **lifetime risk** of 1-2%.

Patchy hair loss

INVESTIGATIONS

- Commonly diagnosed **clinically.**
- Supported with **trichoscopic examination** and **skin biopsy.**
- Consider other investigations (blood tests) if risk factors or clinical indications present for associated autoimmune conditions

DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS

- **Tinea capitis:** fungal infection causing hair loss that is scaling and pruritic
- **Trichotillomania:** irregular patches of incomplete hair loss often in frontoparietal regions.
- **Telogen effluvium:** diffuse hair shedding leading to hair thinning occurring typically 3 months after a physiologic or emotional stressor

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

- **Familial**: genetic predisposition and polygenic.
- **Autoimmune response**: linked with comorbidities (atopic dermatitis, autoimmune thyroiditis, IBD, SLE, vitiligo).
- **Triggers**: emotion/physical stress, infections or medications.

PRESENTATION

- **Multiple clinical subtypes**
- "**Patchy**" is most common. The patches either show total hair loss, or fine vellus hair growth.
- Can progress to all scalp hairs: "**alopecia totalis**" or all scalp and body hair: "**alopecia universalis**"
- Well-defined round or oval shape on any hair-bearing body site, including eyebrows and eyelashes.
- Affected areas have normal smooth skin appearance without scaling or inflammation.
- Nail changes such as pitting, brittleness and striations

MANAGEMENT

- Initial "**wait and see**" approach: possible spontaneous recovery within a year.
- **Dermatology** referral for extensive hair loss or refractory cases.
- First/second line therapy may vary based on severity of hair loss and age
  - **First-line therapy:** Medium to high potency topical steroids, intralesional steroids, topical minoxidil
  - **Second-line therapy:** Topical immunotherapy, systemic steroids, Janus kinase inhibitors

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. Sargam (Medical Student, University of Alberta) and Dr. Eunice Chow (Clinical Academic Dermatologist, University of Alberta) for www.pedscases.com