

Phototoxic reaction to bakuchi seeds tried as home remedy in a patient of vitiligo

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To the Editor:

Numerous videos are available on YouTube and other social media platforms regarding treatment of various diseases. Unfortunately, many of these videos are posted by unreliable sources. Patients lured by watching these videos, blindly follow their recommendations. It may sometimes lead to disastrous complications.

Vitiligo, although a non-communicable disease, is still a social stigma in our society. Such patients are desperate for any treatment which promises quick results. Some of these patients end up applying home-remedies which result in unwanted outcomes. We report a patient who prepared a home remedy as recommended in a YouTube video for the treatment of vitiligo and developed a phototoxic reaction.

A 36-year old woman with vitiligo presented to our outpatient department with complaints of fluid-filled bullae and redness over white patches of vitiligo for a period of three days associated with pain and burning. The patient had applied a mixture of crushed bakuchi (babchi) seeds and coconut oil and exposed the vitiliginous part to the sun for 5 minutes. Within half an hour of sun exposure, she started developing redness, intense pain, and a burning sensation at these sites, followed by the development of bullae over the white patches. She was not on any medications for other ailments. Our patient informed us that she had learned this remedy from a YouTube video. On examination, erythema

was present over pre-existing vitiligo patches on the forehead, neck, arms, and forearms. Multiple tense, turbid looking bullae were noted at the same sites (**Figure 1**). A diagnosis of phototoxic reaction to bakuchi seeds was made. She was advised to follow strict photoprotection and started on a tapering dose of oral prednisolone, levocetirizine, and a combination of betamethasone and fusidic acid creams for local application. She recovered within one week of starting treatment.

Vitiligo is often associated with social stigma, hence patients are desperate for a quick remedy of the disease. Plenty of home remedies are advertised over the internet and social media and such patients fall prey to it. In this case our patient had used bakuchi

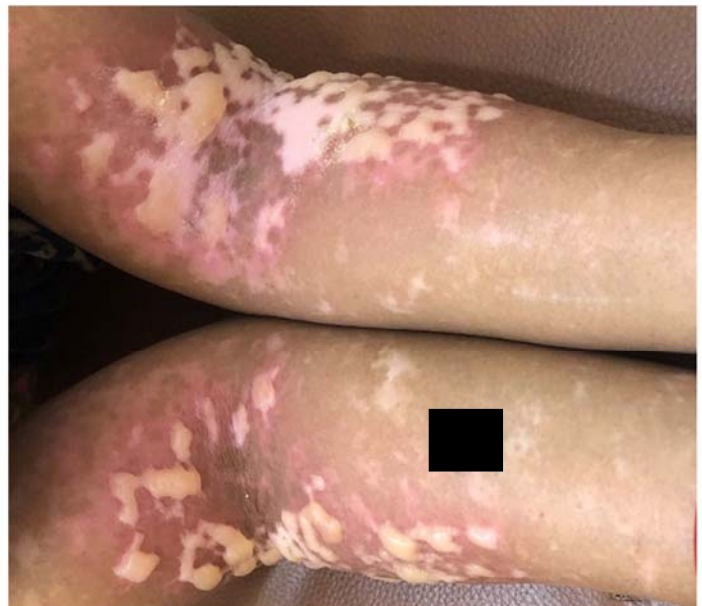


Figure 1. Multiple tense, turbid looking bullae over pre-existing vitiligo lesions.

seeds mixed with coconut oil. A similar case has been reported resulting from a mixture of vinegar, babchi oil, and bitter gourd [1]. Bakuchi is a herbal plant belonging to the genus *Psoralea*, species *corylifolia* Linn [2]. Fumarocoumarins of seeds and leaves of the plant which contain psoralen and isopsoralen are highly likely responsible for the phototoxicity in this patient. Its seeds and oil are freely available in India. It is advertised as a blood purifier and is also used in treatment for vitiligo, eczemas, fungal infection, scabies, and leprosy [2]. Patients with these conditions should be encouraged to take advice from qualified dermatologists only. If patients do not prefer an allopathic doctor then they should present

to qualified practitioners of other concerned pathies (homeopathy, Ayurveda and Unani). Self-medication by internet or social media recommendations can lead to disastrous complications.

Some regulation of contents on social media platforms should be considered. Contents related to the medical profession should be monitored in some way by qualified practitioners. Patients should be discouraged from trying out unsubstantiated home remedies.

Potential conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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