

Relapse of Pemphigus Vulgaris Following Rituximab Therapy: A Case Report Highlighting the Role of Alcohol Use and Poor Glycemic Control

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Abstract: *Pemphigus vulgaris (PV) is an autoimmune blistering disorder characterized by intraepithelial acantholysis due to autoantibodies against desmogleins. Rituximab, a CD20-directed monoclonal antibody, is increasingly recognized as a first-line treatment for moderate-to-severe PV. Despite its efficacy, relapses may occur, especially in the presence of modifiable risk factors. We present the case of a 60-year-old man with a known diagnosis of PV who experienced a relapse following multiple cycles of rituximab administered according to the rheumatoid arthritis protocol. The patient's history revealed poor glycaemic control, nutritional deficiencies, and recent resumption of chronic alcohol use. Clinically, he presented with widespread mucocutaneous erosions and vesiculobullous lesions, with positive Marginal Nikolsky and Asboe-Hansen signs. Laboratory results showed leucocytosis, hypoalbuminemia, microcytic hypochromic anaemia, and slightly abnormal liver function tests. The patient was managed with high-dose corticosteroids, azathioprine, and supportive topical and systemic therapies. While no direct causal relationship has been established between alcohol use and PV relapse, this case underscores the potential impact of lifestyle factors and metabolic instability on treatment outcomes. To our knowledge, there are limited case reports describing alcohol-induced PV relapse. This case emphasizes the significance of lifestyle changes and thorough patient education are to the long-term treatment of autoimmune skin conditions.*

Keywords: Pemphigus vulgaris, Rituximab, Alcohol use, Immunosuppressive therapy, Glycaemic control

