

Myxoedema and a lost wedding ring

A 44-YEAR-OLD WOMAN was brought to hospital by police. Over a period of years she had isolated herself and her daughter from society, arousing the concern of neighbours. A scant history of “schizophrenia”, personality disorder and intellectual disability was obtained from distant relatives.

Examination revealed classic clinical features of profound hypothyroidism. In addition, a lump was found on the patient’s ring finger (Box 1, A). Her mental state necessitated admission, after a psychiatric consultation, as an involuntary patient.

Investigations confirmed the diagnosis of hypothyroidism and indicated anaemia due to iron deficiency (Box 2). An x-ray of the lump (Box 1, B) revealed a wedding ring totally encased in the soft tissue. The patient was started on thyroxine and antipsychotic medication and transferred to a psychiatric institution, with marginal improvement in her mental state. Her daughter was removed to the care of child welfare authorities. The wedding ring was surgically removed. Histopathological examination of the lump revealed a foreign body granuloma with chronic low-grade *Staphylococcus aureus* infection.

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2: Results of biochemical and haematological tests

Test	Result	Reference range
TSH (thyrotropin)	404 mIU/L	0.1–4.0 mIU/L
T4 (thyroxine)	3 pmol/L	9–26 pmol/L
Antithyroglobulin antibody	>2000 IU/mL	< 100 IU/mL
Antithyroid peroxidase antibody	>3000 IU/mL	<100 IU/mL
Total cholesterol	9.0 mmol/L	2.0–5.5 mmol/L
Triglycerides	2.4 mmol/L	< 1.7 mmol/L
Haemoglobin	67 g/L	115–155 g/L
White cell count	4.1 x 10 ⁹ /L	4.0–11.0 x 10 ⁹ /L
MCV	72 fL	80–96 fL
MCHC	315 g/L	300–350 g/L
Platelets	329 x 10 ⁹ /L	150–400 x 10 ⁹ /L
Vitamin B ₁₂	619 pmol/L	150–600 pmol/L
Serum folate	17 nmol/L	7–39 nmol/L
Red cell folate	965 nmol/L	390–1600 nmol/L
Iron	8 µmol/L	7–35 µmol/L
Transferrin	3.5 g/L	1.9–3.2 g/L
Transferrin saturation	9%	20%–60%
Ferritin	7 µg/L	20–120 µg/L

MCV = mean cell volume. MCHC = mean cell haemoglobin concentration.
TSH = thyroid-stimulating hormone.

1: Photographs and x-ray of lump on patient’s ring finger

A: 5 cm firm, non-tender, circumferential and contiguous lump



B: X-ray, showing wedding ring totally encased in soft tissue

