

Pirfenidone photosensitivity rash in a patient with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis

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Currently pirfenidone is the only drug that has been approved by the European Medicines Agency for the treatment of mild to moderate idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) and it is administered only by specialized centres to selected patients^{2,3}. The most usual side effects that were reported in the CAPACITY placebo controlled trials are skin rash (32%) and photosensitivity (12%)². In the trial conducted by Azuma and colleagues, photosensitivity was reported in 32 of 72 patients (43.8%) of which only 5 patients needed to be taken off medication. One possible explanation for this effect is the immunomodulatory activity of the drug that can provoke autoimmune reactions manifested as photosensitivity. Patients receiving pirfenidone are advised to avoid exposure to the sun, to wear long clothes that cover their extremities and to wear sunblock cream during the summer.

The present patient suffered from IPF treated with pirfenidone who, against recommendations, was exposed to direct sunlight and presented with an itchy rash of his lower and upper extremities. Pirfenidone was discontinued and the patient was treated symptomatically. One month after drug discontinuation full remission of the rash was observed and the patient restarted pirfenidone at a lower dose.



FIGURE 1. Patient with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis treated with pirfenidone: Itchy macular exanthema with flaking on the forearm.



FIGURE 2. Exanthema extending from the shin to the thigh with itchy red plaques.



FIGURE 3. Exanthema on the front of the thigh with plaques and flaking.

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