

Post Vaccination Autoimmunity Case-Study

More Than You Ever Wanted to Know About LPP

In the winter of 2012, I had a passport photo taken. I was shocked by the contrast with my appearance in the photo taken a year earlier. What on earth had happened to me?

What was happening was an autoimmune disease called Lichen Planopilaris (LPP) which had silently eaten away my eyebrows and thinned the skin on parts of my face. Because of the way I wear my hair I had not yet noticed the slow erosion also at work in my hairline, or the signs of inflammation at the roots. In the short walk to the train station after diagnosis, on shaky legs, I planned my withdrawal from life as I knew it.

Lichen Planopilaris belies its odd name. It isn't funny. It's an incurable scarring alopecia, which means once you have lost your hair it will never grow back. As I experienced it, it starts at your hairline and works inwards; and to add insult to injury it starts working in other places on your head at random. It happens slowly - a hair a day, as my dermatologist put it - which (perversely) means you need to act with urgency as soon as you spot the problem, because once done the damage is permanent. You don't mess around with this - and if anyone reading this thinks hair-loss is a non-medical cosmetic issue, just ask anyone who's been affected by LPP. There's a huge amount of uncertainty over what will happen to you. You might be one of the people who get it so mildly you don't even notice it. You might lose about half a centimetre of hair from your hairline. You might lose eight centimetres. Or, you might lose all your hair. Diversity, shmiversity, there are legal protections against race, gender, or disability discrimination, but not this social disaster. I didn't want to live like that.

TREATMENT

The hope, with LPP, is that it can "burn out" (but how long this might take is uncertain). The medical advice I received was, if treatment can successfully calm the inflammation for long enough to protect the roots of your hair until burnout, you might get to keep your hair. The treatment in my case was a short reducing-dose course of steroids, and a course of topical steroids in shampoo and lotion for much longer. After that I met my dermatologist about every three months to see if my hair was still hanging in there. No matter what happened in between appointments, I had no problem sticking to the daily regime of hair washes and lotion - fear saw to that. It was worth the effort. I'll never forget the moment when I heard the words "It's stopped." And the moment, three months later, when he told me I had some modest follicular recovery. "They won't grow long again, they'll always be baby hairs, but it's a bit more coverage." Thanks to the sequence of photographs I had religiously taken every week to document any changes in my hairline, I could (reassuringly) see the evidence with my own eyes. Two years on, I still take a photo if something scares me. There's nothing like the brutal objectivity of a picture.

LPP - TRAVEL JAB SIDE-EFFECT

The lack of hard evidence about this disease (and probably a few others!) is one of several things that makes you feel as if life has gone off the rails - you're out of control, hurting down a cliff. It helped me, psychologically speaking, to research the condition, scouring the internet for published medical papers. I also knew it would help me mentally to work out when and why this had happened. It turned out that a course of travel jabs had set going an autoimmune reaction. Why this precise response who knows, but, basically, my immune system was attacking my hair follicles. (It turned out to be attacking my thyroid gland, too.)

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

My GP was not encouraging about my research efforts. "Surely your dermatologist will have all this." Well, maybe. But, the causes of LPP are complex, and probably a bit different with every individual. With LPP it

really is worth trying to work out when and why it all started, because any such new knowledge might help other people who get it in the future. For so many of the people who have it, marking the beginnings of what is, at first, a slow subtle process over several months is impossible. That means the state of scientific knowledge is full of holes, and there is not yet much epidemiology. As a patient (and citizen scientist with a powerful motive to become an expert) you can sometimes help produce useful evidence. It took me about six months from diagnosis and a Eureka moment to link dated vaccination certificates and photos as possibly relevant documentation. My dermatologist took one look and said: "This is it. From now on don't travel to places where you need vaccinations. Go somewhere else."

HERE COMES THE CAVALRY - ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE

The irrational urge to try and take control was also powerful motivation to keep looking for ways of fighting inflammation from the inside. I didn't care that these efforts might be futile, I was prepared to try more or less anything to stop the process. I would have stood on my head in a cowpat for twelve hours, willingly. Through a stroke of luck, I met Becky Dutton, who introduced me to the idea of environmental medicine. This is an enlightening medical approach that looks for the root causes of inflammation and seeks to remove them. When I met my environmental doctor for the first time I said: "I know what I have is incurable. But what I would like to do with your help is to do what I can to maximise my chances of conventional treatment success. Should the steroids work, I'd also then like to minimise the chances of a recurrence."

THANK YOU, EYEBROWS?

I got a lot more than I bargained for. Thanks to environmental medicine I found out I had a metals problem - an overload of mercury and nickel doing goodness knows what to my health. I think the metals were (probably) not the direct or sole cause of my LPP. There is little doubt in my mind (based on hard evidence and the judgement of my dermatologist) that the jabs were the actual trigger; on the other hand LPP is an inflammatory process so the metals might well be involved somewhere. I'm no medical expert, but with the benefit of experience and hindsight and having listened to a lot of experts and read lots of papers, I suspect that, because of the way I happen to react to metals, and because my immune system was probably already pretty inflamed by their invasion, I was an inflammatory accident just waiting to happen. Take a body overloaded with a couple of toxic metals, add genetics and jabs (some of which may contain inflammatory metallic adjuvants like mercury), and the rest is history.

"It's a case of thank you, hair, for alerting you to your metals problem," said my environmental doctor. I said I would rather thank my eyebrows for being the canary in the coal-mine and my hair for (so far) mostly deciding to stay on my head. Every day, as I spend four minutes creating an artist's impression of eyebrows, I thank my lucky stars and keep my fingers crossed.

I'LL DO ANYTHING TO STOP THIS

My environmental doctor did not ask me to stand on my head in a cowpat but she sometimes came close. I was advised to change my mercury amalgam fillings to something safer with a mercury free dentist. She asked me to change my diet - no grains (not just wheat but oats, corn, and soy and its derivatives too); no added sugar, no processed food, no bad fats; plenty of 'good' cold pressed oils, good fats, nuts and seeds, organic salads, lots of organic vegetables, green juice, stocks and bone broths, probiotic food such as sauerkraut and kimchi, organic protein, moderate carbohydrates, no desserts. After a few months of this, a long course of prescribed supplements followed, designed to help the body's physiology evict persistent toxins. Without the state of fear induced by LPP it is highly unlikely I would have complied as far as I did with this demanding regime. I did occasionally cheat - I'm only human. I used to think getting rid of mercury fillings was for cranks (I now don't); and standing on your head in a cowpat sounds marginally easier than eating sauerkraut (one of the very few foods I happen to find absolutely disgusting) - thank goodness for kimchi.

LPP - NOTHING TO DO WITH DIET

The medical advice I received at the time of my diagnosis was that LPP is nothing to do with diet.

So, I'll never know for sure if these life-style (especially dietary) changes are indirectly helping to prolong the burned out status of my LPP, by helping me to eliminate and avoid the inflammatory metals. Burnout in my case could simply have been a late stage in the evolution of an unlucky one-off autoimmune reaction, held back by steroids as it cooled with the passing of time. (Thank you, dermatology.)

BUT I'M STILL PLACING THE ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DIET BET

I will also never know for sure whether my LPP is going to start off again, or not. That sense of uncertainty is no bad thing. It makes me vigilant - if anything seemed to be moving I would now know to react quickly and get to my dermatologist. Otherwise, the good news is that the diet and programme of supplements tailored for me by my environmental doctor have cleaned out the metals, and my sensitivity to them has plunged. I think there's a good chance that the (next) inflammatory accident waiting to happen, whatever it was, has probably receded, and that can only be a very good thing. Eating for nutrition, and cooking creatively, are anyway such pleasures I'm happy to keep placing the bet that this is the right thing to do. The nickel problem (another story for another day) adds spice to the challenge.

THE NEED FOR MORE RESEARCH

My curiosity is unlikely to be satisfied - I'll probably never know if it's correct to blame a collision between the immune insult (the jabs) and other preconditions such as the metals (and perhaps genetics) for my LPP, rather than the jabs alone. Some day I think someone will carry out the research that answers such questions for this and other vaccination side-effects. I'm no expert but I think, with more knowledge in this complex space, vaccination programmes might become tailored to be more effective (with fewer side effects) on the basis of different predicted responses in different people. That would not only be a big improvement in itself; it would be in tune with the leading edge in medical research more generally.

QUESTIONS

Until this experience, I gratefully accepted the benefits of vaccination without question. Now, I have a LOT of questions. They are not anti-vaccination questions. They are about how vaccination is done.

What I don't understand in light of this experience (and considering the "first do no harm" principle in medicine) is: why metal sensitivity is not routinely tested before and after the administration of vaccines containing metallic adjuvants and preservatives; why population immune system health (gut health included) is seemingly not questioned before the rollout of vaccination programmes; why the healthcare profession seems (with a few encouraging exceptions) so defensive - and so unwilling to discuss vaccination side effects; why vaccinations are dished out as easily as smarties; why health professionals I have asked seem to be unaware that some vaccines may contain neurotoxic metals even though they're disclosed in the packaging; why neurotoxic metals are still added to vaccinations in the 21st century.

Looking back to when I had the jabs, I had actually asked the nurse about side effects. She smiled and said nothing. She could not possibly have known what would happen to me. She administered the jabs in good faith. Nevertheless, I now know that this kind of uninformed, uninformative response, to what was actually a very good question, is the wrong answer.

Topical Reading

VACCINATION SIDE EFFECTS

Hep B Vaccination Reactions (including alopecia).

<http://www.shoemakerassociates.com/documents/Geier-AReviewofHepBVaccination.pdf>

A dysbiotic gut (which can be a side effect of metal toxicity) may affect how the immune system responds to vaccines.

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/gut-microbes-may-help-determine-our-immune-response-to-vaccines>

MERCURY TOXICITY

Mercury as problematic with certain genetics.

http://www.nel.edu/pdf_w/24_12/NEL241203A09_Bartova--Sterzl_wr.pdf

Mercury as an extra risk factor for people with autoimmune diseases.

http://www.nel.edu/pdf_/25_3/NEL250304A07_Prochazkova_.pdf

Improvement in autoimmune patients after mercury amalgam removal, but nickel as a complicating factor.

http://www.nel.edu/pdf_/25_3/NEL250304A07_Prochazkova_.pdf

LPP

Prognosis

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2133.2008.08861.x/abstract>

LPP and thyroid disease connection

[http://www.jaad.org/article/S0190-9622\(14\)00928-1/fulltext](http://www.jaad.org/article/S0190-9622(14)00928-1/fulltext)

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