

## Pemphigus Syphiliticus: Early Presentation of Congenital Syphilis

Saghir S<sup>1</sup>,  
Azitoune S<sup>2\*</sup>,  
Charaf FZ<sup>2</sup>,  
Abilkassem R<sup>1</sup>,  
Ourrai A<sup>1</sup>,  
Hassani A<sup>1</sup> and  
Agadr A<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Pediatrics, Military Hospital Mohamed V of Rabat, Morocco

<sup>2</sup>Department of Pediatrics, Children's Hospital of Rabat, Morocco

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**\*Corresponding Author:**  
Dr. Azitoune Sanae,  
Department of Pediatrics, Children's  
Hospital of Rabat, Morocco

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### Clinical Image

A newborn baby admitted for respiratory distress, from an unmonitored pregnancy, birth weight 3200g, 29-year-old mother, G2P1, with no particular history, height of 51.5cm and head circumference of 35.5cm. The clinical examination revealed desquamative palmar skin lesions in the hands and the feet of the baby (Figure 1). Due to the presence of hepatomegaly (2cm below the costal margin) and absence of maternal screening, syphilis tests were requested and showed a positive syphilitic serology in the newborn and his mother. The ulcerated skin lesions resolved following 16 days of antibiotic treatment (penicillin). Pemphigus is the first sign of congenital syphilis and appears in the first days or weeks of life.

It can be found on all of the skin (respecting the mucous membranes), and particularly in the palmo-plantar regions [1]. It corresponds to a bullous eruption of the newborn which develops in utero; these bubbles contain a cloudy, greenish then hemorrhagic liquid. When the bubble dries, a crust remains which falls off, leaving a rounded scar. At the time of delivery, the bubbles are often already ruptured and leave an exulcerated, purplish-red polycyclic area exposed. It has been reported that pemphigus syphiliticus can be misdiagnosed as pemphigus vulgaris, which is a bullous disease linked to viral infections. Timely diagnosis and effective treatment are vital for these cases with congenital pemphigus syphiliticus [2].

**Keywords:** Congénital Syphilis; Pemphigus syphiliticus



**Figure 1:** Desquamative skin lesions in the hands and the feet of the baby

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