

A Medical Mystery — Painless Ulcers



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A 23-YEAR-OLD PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER LIVED IN A TRADITIONAL MUD hut with a thatched roof in a rural savannah village in Gambia. Several painless ulcers developed on his lower legs during a three-month period. The lesions did not respond to local antimicrobial therapy (2 percent fucidic acid ointment applied four times daily for one week) or systemic antimicrobial therapy (500 mg of floxacillin four times a day for two weeks). A typical lesion was a clean ulcer with a raised, purplish, indurated edge. The diameter was similar to that of a Gambian dalasi, which is 3.1 cm. The patient had not previously traveled outside the United States. What is the diagnosis?

Editor's note: We invite our readers to submit their answers at www.nejm.org/mystery. We will publish the diagnosis in the Correspondence section of the May 27, 2004, issue and e-mail it to everyone who submits an answer. All answers must be received by April 15, 2004.

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