

Clinical Reminder

Dermoscopy of pediculosis pubis in an octogenarian man

Keywords: dermoscopy, pediculosis, pubis, octogenarians, older people

Key Points

- Pediculosis pubis should serve as a differential diagnosis of pubic pruritus in older patients.
- Pubic lice are harder to see with naked eye since they are smaller, less pigmented and slowly mobile than head/body lice.
- Dermoscopy is rapid and efficient for diagnosis and monitoring by visualizing lice and/or nits.

An 83-year-old otherwise healthy widower presented with a 6-month history of anogenital pruritus, which developed 7 days after staying at a guesthouse. Cutaneous examination showed numerous brown flecks in his pubic, anoscrotal and inguinal hair (Figure 1A). Polarized dermoscopy revealed adult lice, nymphs and nits attached to the hair; and reddish-brown faeces on the skin (Figure 1B and Supplementary Video 1). Pediculosis pubis was diagnosed. Permethrin and pyrethrins with piperonyl butoxide are recommended treatments for this condition, but are not available in China. Therefore, a 4-day topical treatment with 10% sulphur ointment following hair shaving was used, but found to be unsatisfactory due to dermoscopic display of several viable nits at 1-week follow-up. He was successfully treated with an additional 7-day regimen.

Pediculosis pubis is caused by *Pthirus pubis* (pubic/crab louse) and transmitted by sexual, physical or rarely fomite contact [1]. Pubic lice are harder to see with naked eye since they are smaller, less pigmented and slowly mobile than head/body lice [2]. Dermoscopy is rapid and efficient for diagnosis and monitoring by visualizing lice and/or nits [1, 2].

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Declaration of Patient Consent: Written informed consent for publication of his clinical details and images was obtained from the patients' proxy.

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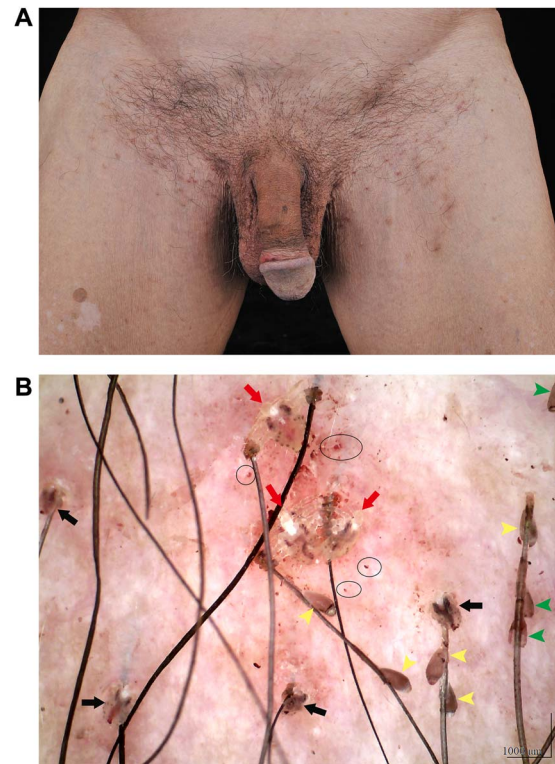


Figure 1. (A) Numerous brown flecks in the pubic, scrotal and inguinal hair. (B) Polarized dermoscopy of the scrotum showing three crab-shaped, translucent, adult lice (red arrows) hanging onto the hair shafts with brown pincer-like claws; four translucent or brown nymphs (black arrows) inserting into the skin at the hair roots; five brownish ovoid unhatched nits with conoidal opercula (yellow arrowheads) and three empty nits with flattened ends (green arrowheads) cemented onto the hair shafts; and multiple reddish-brown faeces (black circles) on the skin ($\times 30$).

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