

Wristband Circumferential Ulcer – Ignored Elastic Beneath Holy Thread

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DEAR SIR

Wearing rubber bands and elastic threads on wrists is a cultural practice in many places. These unsuspecting objects pose a great threat to the children, especially those less than 5 years of age. The children accidentally wear them around the wrist in the absence of adult supervision, and often forget, thereafter. Though not common, there have been reports published in literature where these bands have caused constriction resulting in simple to grave complications.

A 5 year old, girl was brought to our emergency room with complaints of fever, pain and swelling of the right hand beyond the wrist and a non-healing foul smelling circumferential wound over wrist. At the time of presentation, there was edema of right hand distal to wrist and a circumferential ulcer over right wrist crease, covered with slough. Pulses were palpable in the right forearm. The color of finger and hand were normal and capillary refill time was less than 2 seconds over tip of fingers. The movement of wrist was painful but movement of fingers was normal. There was history of tying holy thread on right wrist as a religious practice for sound sleep of child and the parents suspected that this thread caused infection of skin and so they removed it.

The most striking feature in this case is the nature of ulcer covering entire circumference of the wrist. The wound was cleaned with normal saline and simple exploration was done with forceps. A skin colored elastic rubber band was found buried at the base of this wound, which was pulled up and cut (Figure 1). The wound was dressed and patient was discharged on oral antibiotics.

Patient was seen in follow-up and the wound has healed completely.

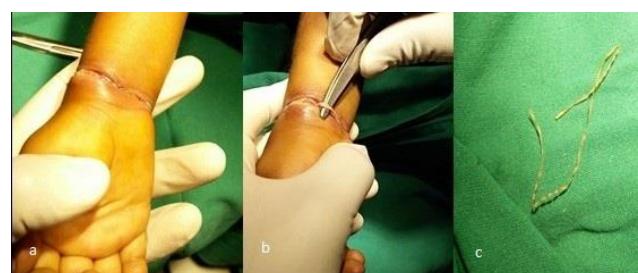


Figure 1: (a) Circumferential infected Ulcer over wrist (b) Elastic band at base of ulcer (c) extracted elastic band.

There have been several cases discussed in literature about elastic/rubber bands causing constriction at wrists and producing wide variety of symptoms and can even damage neurovascular structures [1-3].

Total fifteen cases are reported till now, all from India, all less than six years of age with a pathognomonic feature of circumferential linear scar [4].

The presentation may be variable and can cause simple superficial ulceration, ulcers, compartment syndromes and osteomyelitis. What has been particularly interesting in our case is that parents suspected constriction from thread, which was removed. Despite this patient had persistent non-healing ulcer and worsening of symptoms. The elastic bands are usually painless when worn around the wrist but the constant pressure that they exert over skin and underlying structures causes ischemia

and necrosis of the tissue. There have been reports where patients presented with completely healed ulcers and pain in the wrist- x-ray showed osteomyelitis and on surgical exploration, deep-seated rubber bands were found [3]. The imaging, like x-ray, USG and MRI may be required sometimes when the diagnosis is difficult [5].

We conclude that a simple but thorough exploration keeping high suspicion of buried elastic or thread while dealing with circumferential wounds over wrists or fingers can avoid serious morbidity. Even if the parents affirm that the band was removed it should be a routine practice to carefully examine the non-healing wounds for forgotten elastic bands or their remnants.

Consent: Authors declared that they have taken informed written consent, for publication of this report along with clinical photographs/material, from the legal guardian of the patient with an understanding that every effort will be made to conceal the identity of the patient however it cannot be guaranteed

Authors' Contribution: All authors contributed equally in concept, design, literature review, drafting the manuscript, and approval of the final manuscript.

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