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Letter to the Editor

Finger Printlessness in Scleroderma

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Dear Editor-in-Chief

Scleroderma is a disease associated with changes in skin elasticity, its hardness, and thickness. These changes often insidiously affect fingertips and eventually make a patient with scleroderma a "fingerprintless person" (1).

A 46-yr-old woman with a 12-yr history of limited cutaneous scleroderma presented with a 3-month history of left foot big toe ulcer. During the examination of hand fingers, the patient reported that her fingerprints have progressively disappeared since the beginning of her disease, making her a "fingerprintless person". Therefore, fingerprint-detecting devices reject her fingerprint where it is used for identification (Fig. 1, A and B). On examination, she had clawed hands, shortened distal phalanges, thick hard skin, and few papillary combs and grooves as well-known manifestations of cutaneous scleroderma (2). These findings were consistent with the patient's ink-and-paper fingerprints (Fig. 1, C and D). After three months of antibiotic therapy, the patient's toe ulcer resolved.

Because of these changes in the skin, many patients with cutaneous scleroderma face problems where their fingerprints are used for identification. Therefore, alternative methods of identification should be considered in patients with cutaneous scleroderma.

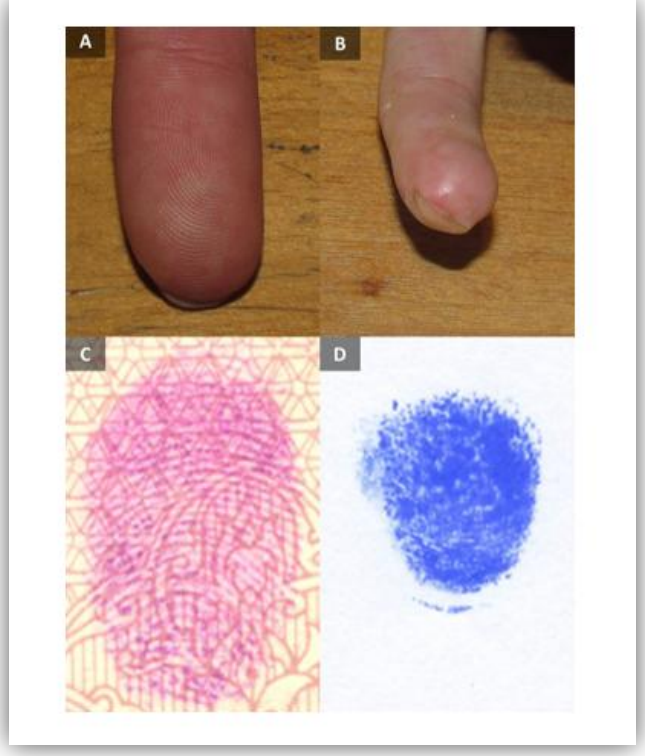

Fig. 1: Right index finger of a normal hand (A) in comparison to the patient (B); ink-and-paper fingerprint of the patient before the onset of the

disease (C) and 12 yr after the onset of the disease (D)

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