

**ON RINGWORM: AN
INQUIRY INTO THE
PATHOLOGY,
CAUSES AND TREATMENT**

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On ringworm: An Inquiry Into the Pathology, Causes and Treatment by William J. Smith

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WILLIAM J. SMITH

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ON
RINGWORM:

AN INQUIRY INTO
THE PATHOLOGY, CAUSES, AND TREATMENT

OF THE SEVERAL DISEASES TO WHICH THIS TERM HAS BEEN APPLIED.

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PREFACE.

THE term 'Ringworm' has not been limited to one disease; and its signification, never very precise, has become less and less so, till the name now implies little more than the existence of an eruption which is circular or ring-shaped. It was applied originally to those affections of the scalp in which the hair breaks off short as if it had been nibbled by a moth-worm; and from this resemblance (rather than from the actual presence of an insect), and the shape of the affected patches, the name 'Ringworm' first derived its origin. *Tinea tonsurans* and *favus* were, therefore, the original forms of Ringworm, but to these several others have since been added.

Tinea and *Porriago* are other titles which have been given to some of these diseases; the former,

derived from *porrum* an onion, having reference to the scaliness of the eruption, and the latter, which literally translated means moth-worm or moth-grub, being nearly synonymous with 'Ring-worm.' Dr. Jenner, however, has defined 'Tinea' as 'the generic name of all the diseases of the skin characterised by the existence of vegetable growths in the substance of the hair;' and, in the following pages, I have employed this term in preference to 'Porrigo,' which has been used so vaguely that it would be well to discard it altogether.

In the hope of rendering the subject somewhat more intelligible, I have described not only those diseases of the skin previously called 'Ringworm,' but others which resemble and are therefore liable to be mistaken for them. I have also subjoined the synonyms in every case where, from the application of the same term to two different disorders, there is any probability of error or confusion.

10 FINSBURY PLACE SOUTH, E.C.

August 1867.

RINGWORM.

SCABIES.

RINGWORM—understood in the strict acceptation of the term, viz. as a ring-shaped eruption caused by the action of an animal parasite—is of very rare occurrence; for though, of the twelve diseases described in the following pages, viz.

SCABIES	ROSEOLA ANNULATA
TINEA TONSURANS	ERYTHEMA CIRCINNATUM
TINEA DECALVANS	LICHEN CIRCUMSCRIPTUS
TINEA FAVOSA	PITYRIASIS
HERPES CIRCINNATUS	ECZEMA
HERPES IRIS	PSORIASIS CIRCINNATA

there are two which are wholly due to the presence of a fungus or vegetable parasite, and a third in which a cryptogam, though not absolutely necessary, is very often present, there is only one that can be ascribed to the action of an insect or animal parasite. This one, scabies, or itch, varies greatly in appearance, and I include it in

my description of the ringworm group because its eruption occasionally, though rarely, assumes a form in which it is liable to be mistaken for that of other diseases of this class. The following cases of the kind have recently come under my notice.

S. B., aged 3, had, three months ago, a few scattered pimples on the chest, feet, and hands, which were regarded by the mother as of no importance, and were said to have got better rather than worse, though allowed to run their course unchecked by treatment. During the three weeks previous to this patient's visit to me, several circular and oval patches had appeared on the back; some as large as, others smaller than, a half-crown piece. The patches were red and rough, and had pimples, papular and vesicular, scattered over them; in some, the centres were quite free from eruption, but, in others, were affected equally with the margins. On the chest was a solitary patch, which, except that the pimples on it were less numerous, resembled those on the back. From one or two of the vesicles could be traced the *cuniculus*, or narrow line produced by the passage of the insect through the skin; and if any doubt had still prevailed in my mind as to the nature of the disease, it would

have been at once removed by examining the hands and feet on which were a few of the typical vesicles of scabies. A sister of this child, seven years old, had similar circular patches on the back, and a brother, aged seven, had the same disease in a more common form. The mother had a few papules on the arm, but her husband was quite free from cutaneous disorder. The two children first referred to were brought to me by the mother to be treated for ringworm, the eruption on the hands and feet being so slight as to have almost escaped her notice. The remedies for itch were applied, and cured the disease quickly.

There is no cutaneous disorder which, under different circumstances and in different individuals, presents such various appearances and the nature and origin of which are so often overlooked, as scabies or itch; whilst the increasing frequency with which this disease is now met with amongst those in easy circumstances, with its contagiousness, render it highly important that it should be well understood; especially as, when detected and properly attended to, there is hardly any affection which yields more readily. In many cases of itch there exist patches which, occurring singly, would be liable to be