

Visibly enlarged peripheral nerves in lepromatous leprosy

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A 52-year-old man from the Peruvian jungle presented with a 4-year history of progressive distal numbness and facial swelling. He had diffusely infiltrated skin on his face, torso, and extremities (figure, A and B), with patchy pinprick sensation loss. Multiple peripheral nerves were palpable, including ulnar and fibular nerves, in addition to visibly enlarged great auricular (figure, C) and superficial radial nerves (figure, D).

Slit skin smears showed up to 5+ acid-fast bacilli. Skin biopsy was compatible with lepromatous leprosy, strongly positive with Fite-Faraco staining.

Enlargement of peripheral nerves in leprosy is well-described; however, hypertrophy visible to the naked eye is rarely photographed.

Author contributions

J.Z. Ding: manuscript conception, drafting, and editing and taking clinical photographs.
P. Legua: manuscript editing and clinical care of the patient.

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Disclosure

The authors report no disclosures relevant to the manuscript. Go to Neurology.org/N for full disclosures.

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(A) Diffusely infiltrated and erythematous skin. (B) Diffuse infiltration of the face with loss of eyebrows. (C) Visibly enlarged greater auricular nerve; also note the enlarged earlobe. (D) Visibly enlarged superficial radial nerve.

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