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IMAGES IN PAEDIATRICS.....

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Suspected non-accidental injury and whirlpool use

Figure 1 Circular red marks on the boy's back. Parental informed consent was obtained for publication of this figure.

A 10-year-old boy presented with an unusual rash on his upper back. The 1.5 cm, circular, reddish marks were identical and non-tender. They were flat and a few lesions contained petechiae. The boy looked well but was admitted overnight due to the absence of any explanation, raising the possibility of undisclosed physical abuse. He told us he looked after himself alone while his mother worked night shifts. He denied accidental trauma or deliberate harm occurring at home or school. He had a history of cat allergy and ringworm. The boy was anxious he might have a rash which medical science had not yet encountered, requiring our reassurance that he was not ill.

A social worker met the family on the ward. She explained that while the law does not set a minimum age at which children can be left alone, it is an offence to leave a child alone when doing so puts them at risk. A joint decision was made to discharge the boy. Social services agreed to visit the home and gain further information from school. It emerged from the home visit that the marks on his back were the same size and alignment as the water outlets in their whirlpool bath. He had recently watched a film on the bathroom television (installed as a bath-time incentive), while enjoying the water jets.

This case illustrates the importance of an open mind and a home visit when faced with medically unexplained signs. Whirlpools have been associated with pneumoperitoneum¹ and infection.^{2–3} This is the first reported case of jacuzzi-induced skin trauma in children.

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