Letter to the Editor (Matters arising from published papers)

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Comment on: Herpes zoster following BNT162b2 mRNA Covid-19 vaccination in patients with autoimmune inflammatory rheumatic diseases: a case series

DEAR EDITOR, We would like to share ideas on 'Herpes zoster following BNT162b2 mRNA Covid-19 vaccination in patients with autoimmune inflammatory rheumatic diseases: a case series' [1]. Furer *et al.* concluded 'Epidemiologic studies on the safety of the mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccines in patients with AIIRD are needed to clarify the association between the BNT162b2 mRNA vaccination and reactivation of zoster' [1]. The adverse event following mRNA vaccination is possible and emergence of 'zoster' skin lesion is sporadically reported. The exact pathomechanism is unclear. If it is an immunopathological problem, abnormal immunity should be identified. In addition, the case is mainly diagnosed based on clinical appearance without dermatopathological investigation. Given that zoster is a possible concurrent medical disorder in COVID-19 [2], 'zoster' lesion might be only a co-incidence in anyone receiving mRNA vaccine. Clinically, zoster is not an uncommon problem in patients with autoimmune inflammatory rheumatic diseases [3]. The epidemiological assessment cannot give a conclusion if there is no complete dermatopathological study.

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Data availability statement

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- 1 Furer V, Zisman D, Kibari A *et al.* Herpes zoster following BNT162b2 mRNA Covid-19 vaccination in patients with autoimmune inflammatory rheumatic diseases: a case series. *Rheumatology* 2021;doi: 10.1093/rheumatology/keab345.
- 2 Loh J, Tham SM, Tambyah PA *et al.* Range of varicella zoster co-infections with COVID-19, Singapore. *Infect Chemother* 2021;53:391–4.
- 3 Furer V, Rondaan C, Heijstek M *et al.* Incidence and prevalence of vaccine preventable infections in adult patients with autoimmune inflammatory rheumatic diseases (AIIRD): a systemic literature review informing the 2019 update of the EULAR recommendations for vaccination in adult patients with AIIRD. *RMD Open* 2019;5:e001041.