INTRODUCTION

Chronic liver disease (CLD) is an important cause of morbidity and mortality in Nigeria and one of the diseases with stigmata that could be detected by good clinical examination of the skin and its appendages. However investigating and treating CLD is not easily affordable for many Nigerians, hence the skin and its appendages being easily accessible could serve as a cheap non-invasive tool aiding in the diagnosis of CLD.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives were to determine the frequency and pattern of dermatological features among chronic liver disease patients at Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital Complex (OAUTHC), Ile-Ife, to determine age and gender distribution of these dermatological features and to compare the stage of chronic liver disease with the presenting features.

SUBJECTS, MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a cross sectional study conducted at the medical outpatient clinics and the medical wards of OAUTHC, Ile-Ife. Selection of patients was by consecutive inclusion of consenting patients after obtaining approval of the hospital’s ethics and research committee. The diagnosis of aetiology of chronic liver disease was made from typical presenting features alongside, biochemical, serological, and/or cytological and radiological evidence. A semi-structured interviewer administered questionnaire was used to obtain information from every participant. General physical examination, systemic examination and examination of the skin, hair and nails were done. The lesions observed were recorded
and data was analyzed using SPSS version 19 software (SPSS, Chicago, IL, USA). A p
value of $\leq 0.05$ was taken as significant.

**RESULTS**

A total of 120 patients participated and completed the study. The mean age (SD) of the
patients was 44(±14.7) years, while the mean age for chronic hepatitis, liver cirrhosis and
hepatocellular carcinoma were 33.1(±8.5), 51.0(±13.6) and 48.1(±14.7) respectively. The
male: female ratio was 2.2:1. There were 39.2% of subjects in Child’s Pugh class A, 55%
in B and 5.8% in class C. The prevalence of dermatological manifestations was 59.1%.
Dermatologic features were commonest in the age group 50-59 years. Dermatologic
features were present in 55, (66.2%) of males and 16, (43.2%) of females. Leuconychia
was the commonest finding in 34.2% followed by fluffy hair in 30.8%, jaundice in 20.8%,
pallor in 20.0%, and female pubic hair pattern in 18.3% of male patients. These features
were commonly seen in middle aged, male patients with liver cirrhosis. There was no
significant association between age and dermatologic features $p=0.15$, however patients’
gender and Child’s Pugh class were significantly associated with dermatologic features $p=
0.018$ and $p= 0.001$ respectively.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Prevalence of dermatological manifestations of chronic liver disease in this study was
59.1% and features were more common in liver cirrhosis patients.

The commonest dermatologic features were leuconychia followed by fluffy hair, jaundice,
pallor and female pubic hair pattern in descending order.

The frequencies of dermatologic features appear to increase with increasing age and were
more frequent in the male sex.
There was a significant association between dermatological features and Child’s Pugh class.