

What Explains This Woman's Symptoms?

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This 65-year-old woman presented with a several-month history of hair loss on the top and back of her scalp that was associated with itching. She was otherwise healthy and was taking no medication. She did not note any skin or hair changes elsewhere. There was no history of trauma.



What explains this woman's symptoms?

- A. Alopecia areata
- B. Lichen planopilaris
- C. Seborrheic folliculitis
- D. Trichotillomania
- E. Androgenetic alopecia

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Answer: Lichen planopilaris



Results of a biopsy confirmed the clinical diagnosis of lichen planopilaris. This inflammatory disease is characterized by lymphocytic destruction of the hair follicle that results in scaling, atrophy, and scarring alopecia, which in this patient's case is demonstrated by loss of the hair follicles. Lichen planopilaris most commonly affects women between the ages of 40 and 60 years. Characteristic perifollicular erythema is usually seen at the periphery of the lesions. This condition is notoriously resistant to treatment. Mainstay therapy involves topical, intralesional, and/or systemic corticosteroids. Nonsteroidal treatment options typically take months to elicit a response.

Alopecia areata is not inflammatory or scarring. Seborrheic dermatitis is not scarring and rarely results in alopecia. Trichotillomania manifests with broken-off hairs and is not scarring. Androgenetic alopecia is asymptomatic and without inflammation.

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