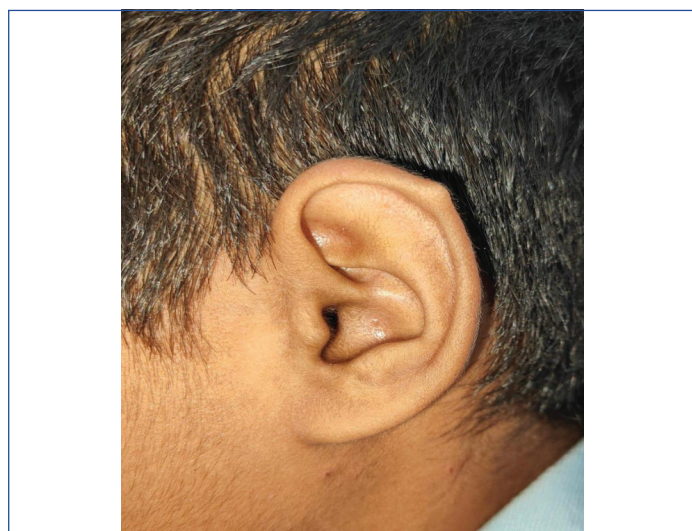


Clinical Image of Darwin's Tubercle: A Rare Auricular Variant

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A 13-year-old male presented to the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Department complaining of a “bump” on the upper part of his left ear. The patient had noticed this prominence since childhood but reported no associated pain or discomfort. His primary concern was cosmetic, seeking reassurance and information about the condition. On physical examination, a cartilaginous prominence approximately 5 mm in diameter was noted on the posterosuperior aspect of the helix of the left pinna [Table/Fig-1]. The overlying skin was unremarkable, and there was no tenderness, erythema, or discharge. The rest of the otoscopic examination was within normal limits.



[Table/Fig-1]: Prominent Darwin's tubercle located at the posterosuperior aspect of the helix of left pinna.

No further diagnostic tests were deemed necessary due to the characteristic appearance and benign nature of the tubercle. The patient was reassured about the non malignant nature of the condition. No surgical intervention was recommended given the absence of symptoms and the minor cosmetic concern. The patient was advised to return if, any changes occurred, though this is considered unlikely.

Darwin's tubercle, first described by Charles Darwin, is a small, cartilaginous bump on the posterosuperior portion of the helix. It is believed to be a vestigial structure, hinting at a common ancestry with primates. Though generally asymptomatic, Darwin's tubercle can sometimes be a point of cosmetic concern. It is a rare anatomical variant with an incidence ranging between 10-58% in specific ethnic groups. It has no known pathological significance and does not affect hearing or ear function [1].

Historically, Charles Darwin referenced this tubercle in his work “The Descent of Man,” suggesting it as evidence of a common ancestry with other primates that have similar auricular structures [2]. Modern genetic studies have explored the inheritance patterns of Darwin's tubercle, indicating that it may follow an autosomal dominant trait with variable expression [1]. Thus, its presence can be of interest in studies of human evolution and comparative anatomy.

Cohen PR et al., presented a similar case of Darwin's tubercle of a 47-year-old healthy male, which was present on the posterosuperior portion of the helix of both ears. There was a cutaneous pit in the left preauricular area indicating the preauricular sinus [3]. Valeriani R et al., reported a case of a 28-year-old female with cosmetic complaints of a hypertrophied Darwin's tubercle, and treatment was done using the Plexr Plus device, which delivers a microplasma ray, heating the surface to be treated; this technique is called plasma exercise [4].

Darwin's tubercle is an interesting, albeit rare, anatomical variant with historical and evolutionary implications. While it is typically of no clinical concern, awareness of this feature is important for clinicians to provide appropriate reassurance to patients.

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