Unexplained Hair Loss in a Four-year-old Boy

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Al O’Pecia

- Al is a 4-year-old male who presents with a 3 month history of hair loss from the top of his head.
Al O’Pecia (continued)

- His parents report that Al has been entirely well:
  - no pulling of hair
  - no fever with this episode
  - no febrile episodes in the past 3-4 months
  - no medications nor ingestions
  - no previous skin, scalp, nor nail disorders
  - no topical chemicals
  - no pets
  - not around any other children with hair loss
Physical examination:

- Normal vital signs: well developed well nourished
- Totally normal exam with the exception of the scalp
  - Diffuse thinning on the top portion of head
  - Hairs of varying lengths
  - KOH - negative for exophytes and endophytes
  - Hair shafts without microscopic developmental anomalies, but ends of hairs appeared frayed
  - Slight increase in telogen hairs
At presentation... hair loss confined to the top of his head. No inflammatory changes are noted. There is no scale...
• A close-up of Al

• There are many broken hairs with frayed ends. The hairs are of varying lengths. There is no scale present. There are no “black dots.”

• His fingernails have no pitting. There are no skin lesions elsewhere.
Al O’Pecia (continued)

- Tentative diagnosis despite lack of supporting history = trichotillomania
- Al is instructed to wear a cap to bed and return in three weeks for follow-up.
- On return, Al was unimproved. A startling discovery was made, however....
Al at his follow-up visit

How can this be? He wore the ski cap to bed every night, but he is unimproved!
And the answer is...
Now, Mr. O’Pecia asks, “Do you think that he plays with his head down on the carpet imitating a snow plow could have anything to do with this?”
Al O’Pecia - Answer

Al would place his head down on the carpet and imitate a snow plow... thus, we had the first reported case of SNOW PLOW SCALP.

Doctor with egg on his face
Reminder...
also ask about breakdancing
Now, you are probably saying to yourself that this case is “one in a million.”

I don’t blame you...

But, check out another case...
Chuck E. Cheese

- 19-year-old sailor seeking medical evacuation from Persian Gulf for hair loss... ? Gulf War Syndrome

- History
  - Gradual loss of hair over last 4-5 weeks
  - Very anxious about girlfriend at home
  - Normal diet
  - Denies pulling at his hair
Chuck E. Cheese (continued)

Physical Examination:

- Loss of hair from top of his head with hairs of varying lengths
- Remainder of physical normal

Lab:

- Microscopic - hair ends broken and frayed
Chuck as he presented to sick-call. He has that nice Friar Tuck appearance. He has a patterned hair loss with hairs that are broken and of varying lengths.
Okay, are you ready for this...

The truth comes out...
Answer: Red Rubber Raft Roof Rot

This was really neat... he and his buddy were bouncing a rubber raft off the top of their heads with a subsequent self-induced baldness not unlike that of trichotillomania.