Subungual Hematoma with Feline Resemblance

Divya Sharma^a Brienne D. Cressey^b Nathaniel J. Jellinek^{a, c}

^aDepartment of Dermatology, The Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University, Providence, RI, USA;

^bDermatology Professionals, Inc., East Greenwich, RI, USA; ^cDepartment of Dermatology, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA, USA

Established Facts

- Dermoscopy can be a helpful aid in distinguishing melanocytic pigmented lesions in nails from those that represent blood.

Novel Insights

- Coincidences without clear clinical significance have been reported in dermatology and are memorable when they do occur.

Keywords

Dermoscopy · Nail · Nail disorder

Abstract

A 54-year-old woman was found to have an incidental pigmented lesion on her right thumbnail. Interestingly, this lesion was in the shape of a cat and she also had a cat tattoo. We briefly review how coincidences have been known to occur in dermatology. We also highlight how dermoscopy can aid in differentiating pigmented lesions from trauma-induced changes.

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A 54-year-old woman presented for Mohs surgery for a basal cell carcinoma on the right upper cutaneous lip. As part of her examination, we evaluated her nails and came across a striking finding. A geometric, sharply angulated, red-brown subungual hematoma was visualized on the right thumbnail (Fig. 1). Another incidental, but pertinent finding was a tattoo of a cat medial to her right elbow (Fig. 1, inset). The patient reported that the finger had been crushed in a car door several weeks prior. Dermoscopic examination confirmed that this was indeed blood and not a pigmented melanocytic lesion [1]. There was also the striking realization that the hematoma had the morphology of a cat! The presence of a feline-shaped hematoma in an individual with a cat tattoo absolutely delighted our patient. Furthermore, she

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Fig. 1. The right thumbnail contains a geometric, sharply angulated, red-brown subungual hematoma, resembling a cat. The same patient's tattoo of a cat is present medial to the right elbow (inset).

disclosed that she was a veterinarian with a particular affection for cats.

This unique coincidence prompted us to explore if coincidences are reported in dermatology. Our patient's exam findings are unlikely to recur and as such are memorable due to their rarity. Coincidences in the dermatology literature are largely described as: (1) the occurrence

of multiple dermatoses in the same patient, with an explanation of a possible unifying underlying association, and (2) medication-induced cutaneous eruptions. Rarely, coincidences without clear clinical significance, yet still remarkable, have been reported such as the series of cutaneous nevi in the shape of hearts [2]. We shared this example in deference to those who appreciate the longstanding relationship of humans and cats. Records of the close association of cats and humans date as far back as 9,500 years ago [3]. Cats have served as protectors historically by hunting rodents. However, more recently, the role of cats in context of pet ownership has changed to that of companionship.

This case also highlights the utility of dermoscopy in the examination of pigmented nail lesions [4]. Dermoscopy can accurately differentiate pigmented lesions that are primarily melanocytic from those representing blood. While the presence of blood does not necessarily rule out a subungual neoplastic process [5], in most instances, it provides enough information to reassure the patient that the lesion is not a melanoma.

Statement of Ethics

The subject has given consent to publish details and photos of the case.

Disclosure Statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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