

A firm black mole

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The diagnosis of pigmented lesions is a daily challenge in general practice. Dermatoscopy can provide extra clues, but requires significant expertise. This series will help you hone your skills.

Case presentation

A 34-year-old woman noted the appearance of a 2 mm firm dark mole below her left eye (Figure 1). This had appeared 18 months previously and had remained stable in size. Dermatoscopy revealed a deeply pigmented lesion which had an irregular border with branched pigmentation and small peripheral dark dots as well as an overlying patchy blue–grey veil (Figure 2). Excision biopsy showed isolated darkly pigmented melanocytes and nests at the epidermal junction as well as pigmented melanocytes forming a spindle cell nodule that extended into the deep dermis (Figure 3).

Diagnosis

The final diagnosis was a benign blue naevus with spindle cells and an overlying benign junctional naevus (combined naevus).

Discussion

The dark pigmentation seen clinically and with dermatoscopy was due to the abundant pigment present within both the junctional and dermal melanocytes. The dark peripheral dots seen with the dermatoscope were due to nests of deeply pigmented melanocytes at the junction. The blue–grey veil in a portion of the mole is a reflection of the pigmented spindle melanocytes being separated from the surface by a filter of relatively nonpigmented skin.

Keypoint

Small moles may have complex features under dermatoscopy and may require excisional biopsy for accurate diagnosis, but they can usually be monitored for stability. **MT**

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Figure 1. Small dark mole below the left eye.



Figure 2. Dermatoscopy showing a darkly pigmented round lesion with an irregular border (demonstrating pigment branches) and small dots as well as a blue–grey veil.

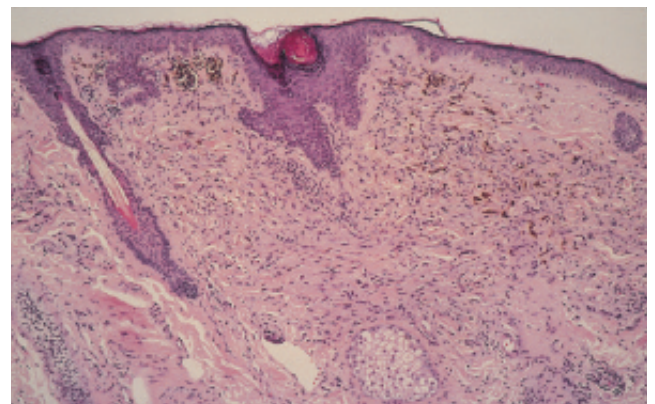


Figure 3. Skin biopsy showing dark nests of melanocytes at the epidermal junction and a pigmented spindle cell component extending into the deep dermis. Note the spindle cell component is separated from the surface by a filter of normal skin in the right upper field.