Dark follicular orifices

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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 78-year-old woman presented with a lesion on her left cheek. It had been frozen nine years before the consultation and had subsequently recurred. The sharply demarcated lesion was dark tan and measured 2 cm x 1 cm (Figure 1). Dermatoscopy revealed multiple dark follicular orifices resembling pigment globules (Figure 2). These varied in size, and many were patulous. The surrounding background lesion had an orange–brown hue and a scalloped border. There was no pigment network visible. Skin biopsy revealed a hyperpigmented epidermis, but the number of melanocytes was normal and there was no atypia (Figure 3).

Diagnosis

The final diagnosis, based on the clinical features and biopsy findings, was a solar lentigo with prominent follicular orifices.

Discussion

Solar lentigines usually have a scalloped border, a light tan colour and no pigment network. On the face, the follicular orifices in solar lentigines are usually pale, producing a polka-dot appearance. Melanin pigment is not accentuated within the follicular orifices. In this case, additional history revealed that the patient regularly used self-tanning lotions. These lotions contain 3 to 5% dihydroxyacetone, and they stain keratin with a variety of golden brown to orange shades. The artificial colour is accentuated in hyperkeratotic areas (such as the palms and soles) as well as in follicular orifices.

Keypoint

Solar lentigines may have pseudoglobular dark follicular orifices in patients using self-tanning lotions. MT

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Figure 1. Angulated dark tan lesion on the patient's left cheek.

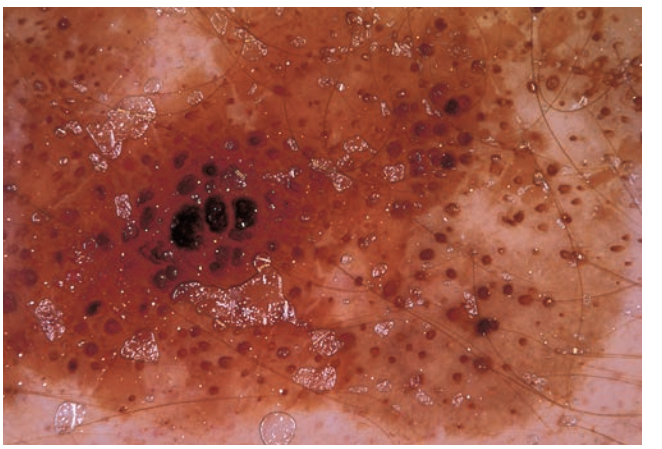

Figure 2. Dermatoscopy demonstrating dark follicular orifices and an orange–brown background lesion with scalloped border and no pigment network.

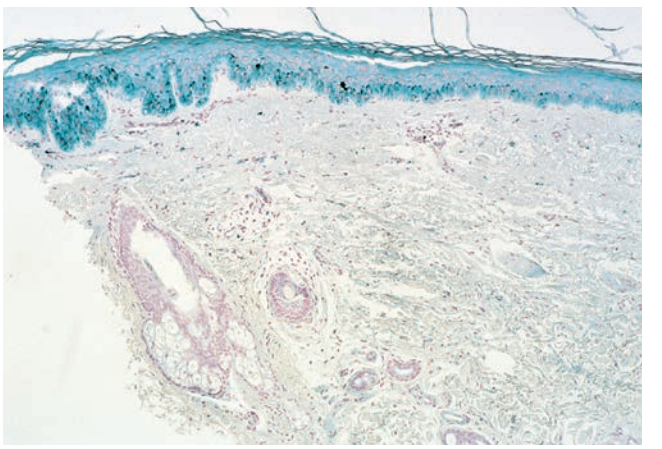

Figure 3. Biopsy showing an epidermis with accentuated basal melanin pigmentation without increased numbers of melanocytes.

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