

A mole with a hazy globular pattern

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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 50-year-old man presented with a 3 mm diameter irregular dark mole on his upper back (Figure 1). According to the patient's history, it had been present for at least three years. Dermatoscopy revealed a mole with an irregular border and a globular pattern that was obscured by a hazy milky veil (Figure 2). The globules varied in size and shape and were tan to grey-blue. The mole lacked a pigment network. The surrounding skin had a patchy network with pale areas associated with telangiectasia. Excision biopsy showed aggregates of uniform pigmented naevus cells within the dermis (Figure 3). There was no evident cellular atypia or mitoses on multiple sections. The overlying epidermis showed a relative absence of pigment, and there was no junctional or intraepidermal melanocytic proliferation.

Diagnosis

The mole was diagnosed as a benign pigmented dermal naevus.

Discussion

The globular pattern seen on dermatoscopy is a reflection of the aggregates of pigmented dermal naevus cells seen on biopsy. The milky veil is created by a zone of relatively nonpigmented skin separating the mole from the surface. The combination in the surrounding skin of mottled pigment network, telangiectasia and hypopigmented patches parallels the freckling and sun damage seen clinically. The main differential dermatoscopic diagnosis is that of metastatic melanoma. The long history, the absence of further lesions and the lack of mitoses or nuclear atypia on biopsy support the diagnosis of a benign mole.

Keypoint

Purely dermal moles may have a globular dermatoscopic pattern, which may be obscured by a milky veil. MT



Figure 1. Irregular darkly pigmented lesion on the patient's upper back.

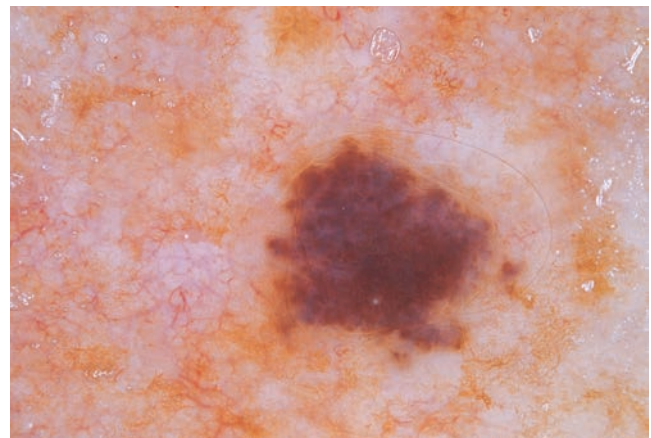


Figure 2. Dermatoscopy demonstrating irregular globules with overlying milky veil. The surrounding mottled skin is created by a combination of broken pigment network, pale patches and telangiectasia.

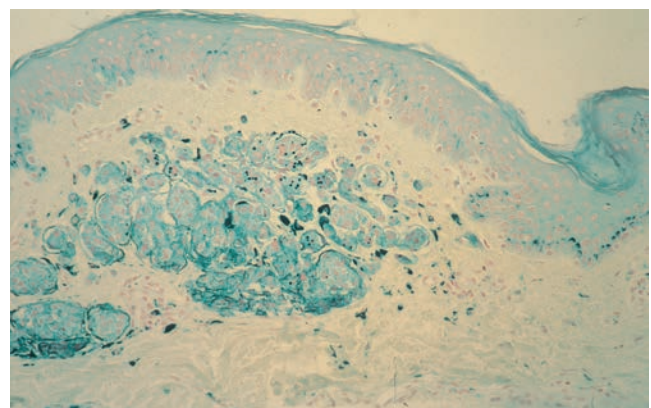


Figure 3. Skin biopsy demonstrating melanin pigment, highlighted in blue, within naevus cell nests in the dermis. Note there is scant melanin pigment in the overlying epidermis.

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