

# A solitary pigmented nodule on the thigh

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With sufficient training and expertise, clinicians can use dermoscopy to improve diagnostic accuracy for melanocytic lesions and other common skin tumours.

## Case presentation

A 55-year-old woman presented with an asymptomatic pigmented nodule on her left thigh that had been present for six months (Figure 1). The lesion was approximately 6 mm in maximal diameter and firm on palpation. Lateral compression of the lesion resulted in dimpling of the nodule. Dermoscopy revealed a central, white, scar-like patch with a delicate peripheral pigment network in association with vertically orientated telangiectatic vessels (Figure 2).

## Diagnosis

The clinical diagnosis was a dermatofibroma.

## Discussion

Dermatofibromas are benign fibrous tumours commonly found on the lower extremities in women. Their colour may range from red through to yellow-brown, and they are occasionally deeply pigmented. Dimpling is classically seen on lateral compression due to tethering of the overlying epidermis (Fitzpatrick's sign). There is anecdotal evidence that these tumours may occur following minor trauma such as insect bites or ingrown hairs.

The histological appearance is a benign spindle cell proliferation within the dermis with a mildly acanthotic overlying epidermis and basal hyperpigmentation. The characteristic central white patch seen on dermoscopy is due to the narrow zone of sparing (Grenz zone) overlying the tumour.

Important differential diagnoses to consider include pigmented basal cell carcinoma and nodular melanoma. When doubt exists, an excisional biopsy should be performed.

## Keypoint

Dermatofibromas are a common finding when examining the skin. Fortunately these lesions have a characteristic clinical and dermoscopic appearance, but they must be differentiated from

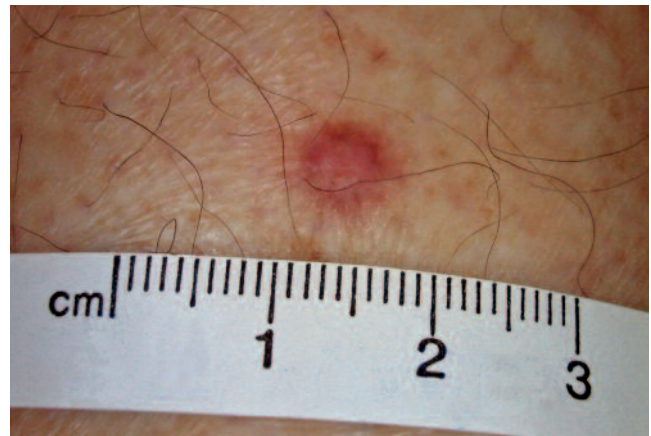


Figure 1. The pigmented nodule on the left thigh.

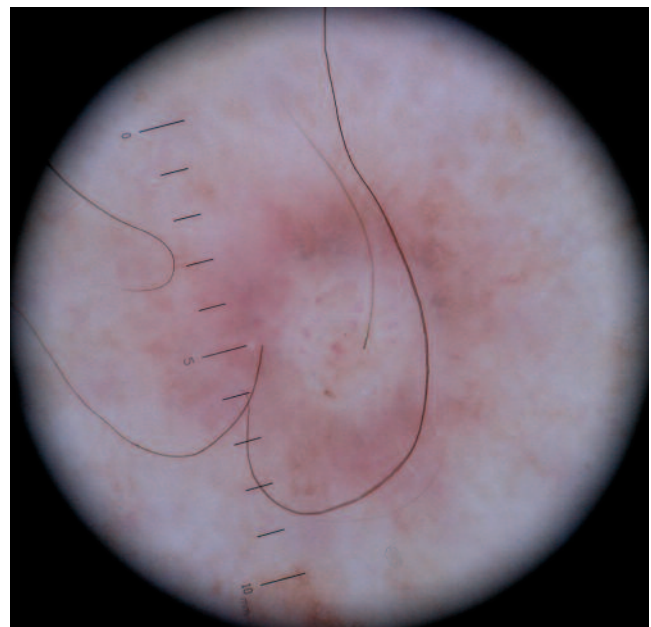


Figure 2. Dermoscopy revealing a central, white, scar-like patch with a peripheral pigment network.

other tumours, such as nodular melanoma and basal cell carcinoma. **MT**

1. Menzies SW, Crotty KA, Ingvar C, McCarthy WH. *An Atlas of Skin*

## Further reading

Surface Microscopy of Pigmented Skin Lesions: Dermoscopy. 2nd ed. Sydney: McGraw-Hill; 2002.

2. <http://www.dermoscopy.org> (EDRA Medical Publishing & New Media, Italy).

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