

doi:10.1016/S0007-1226(02)00410-1

Sensitisation to red tattoo pigment

Sir,

In reply to the recent letter by White and Rauf¹ we report our experience of a case of sensitisation to red tattoo pigment. Our patient presented several months after getting his first tattoo, the emblem of his favourite football club, over his left biceps. On examination, he had developed a marked hypertrophic reaction to the red pigment exclusively (Fig. 1). This is gradually responding to silicone pressure therapy.

Although sensitivity to mercuric sulphide (cinnabar) is well described,² this compound has been removed from most of the commercially available pigments.³ However, various other inorganic and organic compounds in red tattoo pigment may provoke cutaneous reactions.⁴⁻⁶ In one study, red-tattoo reactions associated with organic pigments were also strongly associated with UV exposure.⁶

Our patient's reaction was not photo-aggravated and, unfortunately, the dye used is unknown.

Yours faithfully,

Mairi Macarthur MB, ChB, MRCSEd, Senior House Officer



Figure 1—Marked hypertrophic reaction confined to the red pigment.

Michaela Davies MB, ChB, FRCS, Consultant Plastic Surgeon

Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Foresterhill, Aberdeen AB25 2ZD, UK

References

- White N, Rauf G. Sensitisation to red tattoo pigment. *Br J Plast Surg* 2002;55:365.
- McGrouther DA, Downie PA, Thompson WD. Reactions to red tattoos. *Br J Plast Surg* 1977;30:84-5.
- Timko AL, Miller CH, Johnson FB, Ross E. In vitro quantitative chemical analysis of tattoo pigments. *Arch Dermatol* 2001;137:143-7.
- Waldmann I, Vakilzadeh F. Delayed type allergic reaction to red azo dye in tattooing. *Hautarzt* 1997;48:666-70. In German.
- Sowden JM, Byrne JP, Smith AG, et al. Red tattoo reactions: X-ray microanalysis and patch-test studies. *Br J Dermatol* 1991;124:576-80.
- Bendsoe N, Hansson C, Sterner O. Inflammatory reactions from organic pigments in red tattoos. *Acta Derm Venereol* 1991;71:70-3.

doi:10.1016/S0007-1226(02)00411-3

Pillowcase sling after hand surgery

Sir,

In my career as a hand surgeon, going back almost 40 years, I have used the invaginated pillowslip as a means of directing the hand upwards after injury or surgery for as long as I can remember.

I come from a farming background, and the idea was prompted by the custom of farm workers turning a meal bag into itself, just like the pillow sling, to provide head and shoulder cover in heavy rain.

I would like to add a recommendation to the article by Misra et al.¹ Their figure shows the limb suspended in the sling, and the use of the word 'sling' also implies that. The elbow should be, at all times, resting on a pillow, since there is a risk that the proximal edge of the sling, where it crosses the upper arm, might cause some constriction, with obvious consequences.

Yours faithfully,

J. Colville FRCS

3 Church Close, Ballylesson, Belfast BT8 8JX, UK

References

- Misra A, Huang S, Haywood RM. The pillowcase sling after hand surgery. *Br J Plast Surg* 2002;55:460-1.

doi:10.1016/S0007-1226(02)00468-X

Parotid haemangioma: an unusual presentation

Sir,

Parotid haemangioma accounts for the majority of salivary-gland tumours^{1,2} in children, shows a predilection for female