

The Horny Toe

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INTRODUCTION:

Cutaneous horn, otherwise known as cornu cutaneum in Latin, is a rare skin lesion comprised of dense keratin that protrudes from the surface of the skin in a conical shaped mass. It is usually found at sun-exposed areas such as the face, scalp, pinna, nose and dorsum of hand and forearm. Although largely benign, it has been associated with a variety of premalignant and malignant skin lesions. Here we present a case of cornu cutaneum in an elderly man at an uncommon site, the base of third toe.

REPORT:

A 71-year-old man presented with 15 years history of a recurrent, slow growing horn on his left third toe, causing discomfort while walking and progressive deformity of the toe. No previous trauma was recorded, a previous attempt at horn excision failed to curb its growth. X-ray showed subluxation of proximal interphalangeal joint (PIPJ). Wide excision of horn was done, head of proximal phalanx nibbled followed by insertion of axial K-wire to reduce PIPJ and lastly, full thickness skin graft (FTSG) was applied. Histopathological examination confirmed the diagnosis of cornu cutaneum. His wound healed well and was able to walk without pain.



Figure 1: Pre-operative pictures



Figure 2: Post-operative pictures

CONCLUSION:

Lower extremities are unusual sites for cornu cutaneum. Only a handful of cases have been reported and one similar case with successful excision and FTSG application described. As innocuous as it may look, a cornu cutaneum must always be examined histopathologically to exclude features of malignancy, as one third of lesions is associated with premalignant and malignant conditions.

REFERENCES:

1. Lalehparvar et al. Successful excision of cutaneous horns in the foot and application of a full-thickness pinch skin graft for primary closure. Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association. 2017; 107 (2) 158-161.