

A Concerning Brown Nodule

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A 47-year-old male presents with a firm, asymptomatic, brown nodule on his shin that has been present for several years. He was worried about cancer since his mother recently passed away from colon cancer.

What is your diagnosis?

A dermatofibroma is a benign, indurated, round skin tumour. It is often found on the lower legs, though it can be found elsewhere. These lesions often start out as red and eventually become brown. They are typically asymptomatic, though occasionally there may be pruritus or tenderness. Clinical examination often reveals a “dimple sign” and dermatoscopy performed by a dermatologist is very useful to cinch the diagnosis.

Lesions can be treated safely with liquid nitrogen cryotherapy, shave or deep punch excision.

The precise mechanism for development of a dermatofibroma is uncertain. Historically, it was thought to be due to a minor trauma such as a mosquito bite or ingrown hair. It is now suspected to be a clonal proliferative growth, akin to a neoplastic process but with benign natural history.



Figure 1. Firm, asymptomatic, brown nodule on the shin.

These lesions are more common in women and young adulthood. Occasionally, the diagnosis is uncertain and so biopsy is warranted. Lesions can be treated safely with liquid nitrogen cryotherapy, shave or deep punch excision.

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