



A Swelling Finger Nodule

Benjamin Barankin, MD, FRCPC

A 62-year-old lady presents with concerns regarding a nodule that swells and then drains periodically. She has noticed a depression in her nail, but is otherwise asymptomatic. She has a history of valvular heart disease and is on anti-hypertensives.



1. What is the most likely diagnosis?

- Squamous cell carcinoma
- Mucous cyst
- Verruca vulgaris
- Rheumatoid nodule
- Gout


2. What is the most common cause for this lesion?

- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Chronic sun exposure
- High uric acid levels
- Contact with infected person
- Osteoarthritis

3. How could you manage this lesion?

- Repeated drainage
- Cryosurgery
- Surgical excision or curettage
- Steroid injections
- All of the above

occasionally tenderness. These lesions are most common in elderly women. In most cases, mucous cysts are associated with degenerative joint disease.

Treatment options include various destructive methods such as electrocautery, cryosurgery, chemical cautery or surgical excision. Steroid injections and repeated drainings/aspiration can also be beneficial to induce scarification. Patients should be informed that recurrence rates are high and thus may require multiple treatment sessions. 

Mucous cysts commonly affect distal interphalangeal joints and can cause nail changes (“groove sign”). They are also known as:

- mucoid cysts,
- synovial cysts and
- myxoid cysts.

Patients complain of chronic drainage and

Answers: 1-b; 2-e; 3-e

Dr. Barankin is a Dermatologist practicing in Toronto, Ontario.