



A Pigmented Lesion

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A 58-year-old woman of Asian ancestry presents with warts on the hands. In the course of examination, you note a pigmented lesion on the sole of her left foot. Inquiry reveals it has been present for many years without change.

What's your diagnosis?

- Talon noir (punctate bleeding on the feet secondary to trauma)
- Benign melanocytic nevus (given the history of no change)
- Acral lentiginous melanoma
- Inflamed plantar wart

Answer: Acral lentiginous melanoma (in-situ).

About acral lentiginous melanoma

Although the incidence of melanoma is low in Asians, the majority of cases tend to occur in acral regions of the body. The term "acral" refers to the peripheral parts of the body and include the:

- palms,
- soles,
- digits (subungual variant) and
- ears.


It is important to emphasize a full skin examination should always include these areas of the body. Infrequently, acral melanoma may be misdiagnosed as a plantar wart. Therefore, one should always consider biopsy of a plantar wart



Figure 1. A pigmented lesion on the sole.

which is resistant to conventional treatment.

The development of acral melanoma does not appear to be related to sun exposure. Prognosis is determined by tumour thickness (Breslow depth) and clinical staging. Tumours with < 0.76 mm depth of invasion have favourable outcomes.

As an interesting aside, Bob Marley, the famous reggae artist, succumbed to a metastatic subungual melanoma of the great toe. He refused surgical amputation because of his religious (Rastafarian) beliefs. 

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