



Timothy's Tender Toe

Simon Lee, MD, FRCPC

Timothy is a ten-year-old boy who has been complaining about a painful lesion on his toe for a six month duration. On examination, there is an indurated subungual papule on the distal nail bed (see figure 1). Palpation reveals focal tenderness. There's no associated deformity of the nail plate. Hutchison's sign is negative.

1. What is your provisional diagnosis?

- Subungual wart
- Subungual melanoma
- Subungual exostosis
- Pyogenic granuloma
- Glomus tumor

2. What is your next diagnostic test?

- Biopsy
- Therapeutic trial of salicylic acid plasters and cryotherapy
- Duct tape occlusion
- Oral anti-histamines
- X-ray

3. What does the X-ray show (see figure 2)?

- Translucent cyst
- Atrio-venous malformation
- Calcified projection on distal phalanx

4. What is your next plan of management?

- Excision
- Orthopedic referral
- Topical antibiotic to prevent secondary infection
- All of the above

Subungual exostosis (SE) is a benign osteocartilaginous tumour first described by Dupuytren in 1817.



Figure 1. Subungual papule on nail bed



Figure 2. X-ray of toe

SE most commonly occurs in children and young adults. The etiology is unclear although it has been postulated that repetitive trauma and preceding infection are possible causes of the reactive metaplasia. Surgical excision is the treatment of choice with curettage of the underlying bone to prevent recurrence. **Dx**

Answers: 1-c; 2-e; 3-c; 4-d

Dr. Simon Lee, Dermatologist, Richmond Hill, Ontario