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LASERS

SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT OF INTRAVENOUS DRUG USE RELATED PIGMENTATION WITH Q-SWITCHED ALEXANDRITE LASER: A CASE REPORT.

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Background: Patients with history of intravenous drug usage (IVDU) often develop pathognomonic linear hyperpigmented dermatoses near injection sites. This drug use related pigmentation can be very distressing for patients as they persist for life, are very difficult to treat, and remain a constant reminder of prior drug usage. The difficulty of treatment is due to the location of the deposited material and its exogenous nature.

Q-switched alexandrite laser is a 755-nm wavelength laser that works by utilizing high energy nanosecond pulses to destroy chromophores. Although its use in tattoo removal has been widespread, there are no reported cases on its use on IVDU related pigmentation.

Observation: A 27-year old Caucasian male with history of IVDU (heroin) presented with linear blue-purple scars on his bilateral dorsal forearms and blue-brown scars on his medial lower legs. He reported an 8-year drug-free history with few relapses. The patient presented to our clinic for treatment of the discoloration as it has alerted others of his prior IVDU history. The scars were asymptomatic, without any prior treatment.

Dermatology examination showed linear blue-purple sclerotic plaques tracking along his vasculature were noted on the bilateral dorsal forearms. On the medial lower legs, there were similar appearing linear brown-blue sclerotic plaques.

Two treatments were done on patient's bilateral forearms and medial lower legs using QS alexandrite laser with remarkable improvement. Although sclerotic surface changes are still present, the loss of pigment has greatly diminished the scars' appearance.

Key message: QS alexandrite lasers offer promising results for treatment of IVDU-related pigmentation.





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