



SKIN CANCER (OTHER THAN MELANOMA)

STUBBORN LEG ULCER IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHRONIC OSTEOMYELITIS: RAISE THE RED FLAG!

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Background: Although squamous cell carcinoma is a rare complication of chronic osteomyelitis developing decades after the diagnosis of this challenging problem, every clinician should have in mind this diagnosis and spot early the clinical signs that indicate the malignant transformation.

Early diagnosis by means of biopsies and aggressive treatment of these lesions are fundamental for the prognosis and final results.

Observation: A 74-year-old Caucasian man with a history of chronic osteomyelitis from his early years in the army, presented for the treatment of a chronic leg ulcer that persisted for more than 15 years and was misdiagnosed and treated in various other departments as of venous insufficiency etiology.

Considering the medical history of the patient, the atypical clinical features: necrotic, adherent crust at the base of the ulcer, its stubborn character to the multiple therapeutic options and its chronic course for over more than a decade, anticipating and confirming by bone radiography the persistence of chronic osteomyelitis lesions, we applied the dermatologist's reasoning and decided to do a series of biopsies from the edge of the lesion. The pathological examination of one fragment indicated the presence of cutaneous moderately differentiated squamous cell carcinoma and the patient was referred to an orthopedic center for specialized treatment.

Key message: The presented case is intended to raise awareness on the importance of good clinical observational skills and proper medical judgement, which in many situations would avoid diagnosis delay and unnecessary treatments, thus improving the prognosis and quality of life of the patient, with probably less invasive therapeutic options.

The persistent presence of a chronic ulcer is a red flag sign that should not be overlooked as the life of the patient might depend on it.

