

Cherry Angioma

Angiomas are benign vascular tumors composed of abnormal clusters of blood vessels. These growths are typically non-cancerous and can appear anywhere on the body, although they are more commonly found on the skin. While most angiomas are asymptomatic and do not require medical intervention, certain types may cause cosmetic concerns or indicate underlying health issues.

Classification of Angiomas

Angiomas can be classified into several types based on their appearance and clinical presentation. The two most frequently encountered types are cherry angiomas and spider angiomas.

- **Cherry angiomas**, also known as *senile angiomas* or *red moles*, are small, bright red, or purple growths that often appear on the trunk, arms, and shoulders. These angiomas are most commonly associated with aging, with an increased prevalence in individuals over the age of 30. Cherry angiomas consist of dilated blood vessels and are typically asymptomatic, although they can occasionally bleed when traumatized. The exact cause of cherry angiomas is unknown, but they are generally considered to be a normal part of the aging process and do not carry significant clinical implications unless they bleed or become unsightly.
- **Spider angiomas**, or *spider nevi*, are characterized by a central red spot with radiating blood vessels that resemble a spider's web. These angiomas are often seen in children, pregnant women, and individuals with liver disease. During pregnancy, spider angiomas can result from hormonal changes, while in childhood, they are often benign and transient. In adults, especially when present in large numbers, spider angiomas may indicate liver dysfunction or conditions such as cirrhosis. The underlying mechanisms of spider angiomas in liver disease are linked to changes in hormonal levels and vascular responses, although the precise pathophysiology remains poorly understood.

Etiology

The etiology of angiomas is largely idiopathic, with most types having no known definitive cause. However, certain risk factors and conditions may contribute to their development:

- **Aging**: Cherry angiomas are most commonly seen in older adults and are thought to result from the natural aging process, where vascular structures in the skin become more prominent.

- **Hormonal Changes:** Spider angiomas are often associated with hormonal fluctuations, particularly during pregnancy, adolescence, and in individuals with liver disease.
- **Liver Disease:** The presence of multiple spider angiomas in adults may be a sign of underlying liver pathology, including cirrhosis or liver failure, suggesting a vascular response to impaired liver function.

Clinical Implications

Most angiomas, including cherry and spider angiomas, are benign and do not require medical treatment. They are generally asymptomatic and pose no significant health risks. However, large or numerous angiomas, particularly in individuals with liver disease, may warrant further investigation. Spider angiomas, in particular, can serve as a clinical indicator of liver damage, especially when present in clusters. Therefore, healthcare providers may recommend liver function tests or other diagnostic evaluations in patients with numerous spider angiomas, especially in the context of other liver disease symptoms.

While angiomas are not typically harmful, their presence can sometimes be a source of cosmetic concern, especially if the growths are prominent or located in visible areas. In such cases, patients may seek treatment for aesthetic reasons or to alleviate discomfort from recurrent bleeding.

Treatment Options

Angiomas generally do not require treatment unless they cause symptoms, such as bleeding, discomfort, or cosmetic concerns. Various methods are available for the removal or reduction of angiomas, and the choice of treatment depends on factors such as the size, location, and number of angiomas, as well as the patient's preference.

- **Electrodesiccation** involves the use of an electric needle to cauterize and destroy the blood vessels within the angioma. This procedure is effective for small to medium-sized angiomas and provides a good cosmetic outcome. While discomfort during the procedure is minimal, the treatment can sometimes leave a slight scar, especially if the angioma is large.
- **Cryotherapy** (Liquid Nitrogen) involves the application of extreme cold to the angioma, causing the blood vessels to constrict and the lesion to fall off. This method is often used for surface-level angiomas and provides quick results with minimal discomfort. However, there is a risk of hypopigmentation or scarring, particularly in darker-skinned individuals.
- **Laser therapy** uses a concentrated beam of light to target and destroy the blood vessels within the angioma. The most commonly used lasers for this treatment are pulsed dye lasers or intense pulsed light (IPL) devices, which are effective in targeting the blood vessels without damaging the surrounding skin. Laser treatment is considered one of the most effective methods for treating cherry and spider angiomas, offering precise results with minimal scarring. Multiple sessions may be required for larger or more stubborn angiomas.

Recurrence of Angiomas

While these treatment options are effective in removing angiomas, there is a possibility of recurrence. Angiomas, especially cherry angiomas, may return over time, necessitating further treatment. It is important for patients to follow up with their healthcare provider if they notice new or recurring lesions.

Conclusion

Angiomas, including cherry and spider angiomas, are common benign vascular lesions that can appear on the skin for various reasons. While most angiomas do not pose significant health risks, they may cause cosmetic concerns or serve as a marker for underlying conditions such as liver disease. Treatment options, including electrodesiccation, cryotherapy, and laser therapy, are effective and generally well-tolerated, offering good cosmetic results. Patients concerned about the appearance of angiomas or those experiencing symptoms should consult a healthcare provider to discuss the most appropriate treatment options.

References

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