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Can we find clinical features increasing the suspicion of malignancy in the diabetic foot?

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Aims and background: The purpose of this study is to draw the doctors' attention to the fact that the lesions of the diabetic foot are not always due to diabetes. Moreover, we suggest that there are some clinical features that indicate the presence of malignancy (specially malignant melanoma) added to classical ones. The classical characteristics indicating the presence of melanoma are: **ABCD: Asymmetry, Border** (irregular, indistinct), **Colour** (variegated or dark black), **Diameter** (> 0, 6 cm), and **Elevated** from skin surface. **Subjects and methods:** During the last 5 years on regular examination of the diabetic feet 32 ((thirty two) patients presented with lesions the above characteristics (or at least one) of the following signs 1) The appearance of the lesions that could not clearly be explained by the pathogenic mechanisms of diabetic foot ones, 2) Unexpected bleeding during debridement, 3) Tenderness, 4) Suspicion of sentinel foci around the ulcer. None of the patients exposed his feet to the sun or PUVA. All patients accepted the proposed biopsy that was performed. **Results:** 11 (eleven) patients were found with lesions of non diabetic origin. 5 (five) patients had malignant melanoma (2 were subungual). 1 (one) patient had a keratoacanthoma (painful, with easily bleeding papules), 1 (one) invasive squamous cell carcinoma (easily bleeding vegetations), and 4 (four) patients had benign lesions not related to diabetic foot (Lichen planus, Hyperkeratosis of unknown origin, benign naevus, or verruca plantaris). **Conclusions:** The present study has a small number of cases but it gives an emphasis on the concept that the lesions of the diabetic foot are NOT always related to diabetes. The above mentioned signs clearly indicate at what point should the doctor become suspicious of Malignancies or other benign lesions. Generally speaking, any lesion or sign unexplained by the pathogenesis of diabetic foot ones, should be further carefully investigated.