

Clinical picture

QJM

Pigmented lesions in the oral mucosa: the ugly but good

A 52-year-old man with a history of a malignant melanoma of the scalp was referred to us from a dentist with the suspected diagnosis of oral melanoma. Clinically, we observed a 5-mm blue-grayish macula on the oral mucosa localized under the tongue (Figure 1). The lesion appears smooth. No tenderness or inflammation was present. We made the clinical diagnosis of an amalgam tattoo, as a tooth with an amalgam filling had been extracted



Figure 1. A blue-grayish, smooth macula on the oral mucosa localized under the tongue of a 52-year-old man with a history of malignant melanoma. The lesion is marked with an arrow.

from an area in close proximity to the lesion several years before. However, considering the previous history of melanoma, we performed an incisional biopsy that confirmed our clinical hypothesis of amalgam tattoo. Amalgam tattoos are common asymptomatic solitary blue-black iatrogenic lesions that occur when small particles of amalgam (mixture of silver, mercury, zinc and copper) deposit into oral soft tissues following dental procedures.¹ They are typically localized on the gingival mucosa but they may be seen in all areas of the mouth.² Differential diagnosis may include melanocytic and vascular lesions.

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Conflict of interest: None declared.

References

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