



Dimitrios Malamos



Crispian Scully

Clinical Challenges Q&A

29. Black eye

A 65-year-old woman presented for dental care with an obvious brown-black discoloration of her peri-ocular skin on one side, first noticed on awakening 5 days earlier. Extra-oral examination revealed a unilateral diffuse bruising, restricted to the upper and lower eyelid and malar skin (Figure 1), but with no serious eye involvement. No similar lesions were found in the skin of the face or in other parts of her body. Intra-oral examination revealed no tooth, bony or soft tissue abnormalities. The patient had no serious medical problems apart from a mild hypertension and a chronic depression, often exacerbated by domestic violence.

Q1. What is the diagnosis?

- (a) Leukaemia;
- (b) Traumatic haematoma;
- (c) Thrombocytopenic purpura;
- (d) Anticoagulants side-effects;
- (e) Ageing.

A1. The answer to what is the diagnosis?

Traumatic haematoma inflicted by her alcoholic husband is the likely diagnosis. Older patients have fragile

skin vessels which bleed easily with minor trauma and form petechiae or large ecchymoses on their hands, legs, or other traumatized sites. Patients on anticoagulant drugs or with blood diseases, such as leukaemia or thrombocytopenic purpura, often have a plethora of clinical or laboratory characteristics which were not seen in this patient.

Q2. Which of these factors may be indicators of domestic violence or abuse?

- (a) Physical evidence of previous or recent violence;
- (b) Injuries inconsistent with the patient's life style or history;
- (c) Patient's psychological status;
- (d) Financial status;
- (e) Poor relations with partners or close relatives.

A2. The answer to which of these factors may be indicators of domestic violence or abuse?

Dentists must carefully examine the victim of a suspected domestic abuse for any clinical indications of violence, such as bruises, cuts or burns in the skin of the face or body, broken teeth or bones and scars. These lesions are usually inconsistent with the patient's work, habits or sport activities. Dentists must also assess the patient's mental and psychological status. Abused patients often have a low self-esteem, feel responsible for their punishment and are isolated from friends and relatives. Socially deprived patients may have tension among their family members but this does not necessarily give rise to domestic violence.



Figure 1. Periocular bruises.

Dimitrios Malamos, DDS, MSc, PhD, DipOM, Oral Medicine Clinic, National Organization for the Provision of Health Services (IKA), Athens, Greece and **Crispian Scully**, CBE, DSc, DChD, DMed (HC), Dhc (multi), MD, PhD, PhD (HC), FMedSci, MDS, MRCS, BSc, FDSRCS, FDSRCPS, FFDRCSI, FDSRCSEd, FRCPath, FHEA, Emeritus Professor, University College London, UK.