A Brown Line on a Fingernail of a Teenager
Helen Highwater

- Helen is a 14-year-old female with a brown stripe running down the length of her fingernail for several years.
- PMH and remainder of the physical exam is non-contributory.
Two views of the brown 1-2 mm longitudinal line. There is no nail dystrophy, no variation in the pigment, and no involvement of the periungual skin.
Your answer, please...

What are you going to tell Helen’s mother who is very concerned?
Intradermal Nevus or Longitudinal Melanonychia
Must be differentiated from a malignant melanotic whitlow
Intradermal Nevus (Longitudinal Melanonychia)

- Very common in black patients and represent increased production of melanin in the nail matrix
- The density of pigment is uniform
- The width varies and may increase over time
- Thumb and index finger are the most commonly involved digits
Intradermal Nevus (Longitudinal Melanonychia)

- When should you be concerned that this is an atypical nevus or a melanoma?
  1. If this were present in a caucasian.
  2. If the lesion were >6mm in width
  3. If the lesion had variegation of pigment
  4. Involvement of the periungual/matrix area (Hutchinson’s sign)
  5. If there is also nail dystrophy
So, the right thing to tell Helen’s mother in this case is...

- This is a very common finding in dark-skinned people.
- There is no indication for a biopsy at this time.
- We will continue to observe this when Helen come in for visits, but if there are any significant changes between visits, to let us know.
Therefore,

- No treatment is required...
- Take a picture and place the picture in her file
References


References