The Case of the Knarley Knuckles

J.A. Schneider, D.O.
Phil E. Buster

- Phil is a 12 year-old with a URI and “Oh, by the way, what can you do about my fingers?”
- He has a 2-year history of totally asymptomatic swellings over his knuckles.
- Past medical history is totally noncontributory
Phil E. Buster

Phil denies:

- Any form of trauma including karate and martial arts
- Any habits that could be causative
- Joint swellings
- Sun/photo intolerance
Phil E. Buster (continued)

- Physical examination:
  - Firm, hypopigmented pads over the proximal interphalangeal joints of both thumbs and several fingers
  - no evidence of hypertrophic scarring
  - no subcutaneous nodules nor joint swelling
  - without heliotrope
  - no muscle weakness
Phil's funny knuckles...
Whoa! Those are some knarley knuckles... to the max!
Fleshy, hypopigmented pads over the interphalangeal joint
Okay, take a minute, think this through...

Do you have a differential diagnosis in mind?

...and your final answer is?
Answer: Knuckle Pads

Described by Garrod in 1893, but can be found in Renaissance paintings and Michelangelo's statue of David in Florence.
Answer: Knuckle Pads

- May be primary (autosomal dominant) or secondary to trauma or can be occupational.
- Usually asymptomatic, but a syndrome with leukonychia and deafness has been reported.
Differential Diagnosis: Knuckle Pads

- Scars/Keloid
- Epidermolysis Bullosa Acquisita
- Epidermolysis Bullosa Dystrophica
- Callus

- Granuloma Annulare
- Rheumatoid Nodules
- Digital Fibroma
- Xanthomas
- Dermatomyositis
- Erythropoietic Protoporphyria
References

References

- **Knuckle pads: does knuckle cracking play an etiologic role?** Pediatr Dermatol 2000 Nov-Dec;17(6):450–2  Peterson CM; Barnes CJ; Davis LS  Department of Internal Medicine, Section of Dermatology, Medical College of Georgia, Augusta, Georgia 30904, USA.

- **Knuckle pads--a forgotten skin condition: report of a case and review of the literature.** Cutis 1996 Apr;57(4):241–2  Guberman D; Lichtenstein DA; Vardy DA  Dermatology Department, Hadassah University Hospital, Jerusalem, Israel.
References