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Hands Up, Lesions Down: Position-Dependent Pale Macules

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Introduction

Bier spots present as small, pale macules surrounded by relatively erythematous skin, resulting from localized vasoconstriction as part of a normal vasomotor response. Recognizing Bier spots is crucial as they may mimic common pigmentary disorders such as pityriasis versicolor, vitiligo, and nevus anemicus. We present a case of Bier spots to highlight the diagnostic importance of positional variability in distinguishing this benign vascular phenomenon from true hypopigmentation.

Materials and Methods

A 25-year-old man presented with asymptomatic pale macules on the dorsal aspects of both hands, persisting for 3-4 months. The patient underwent detailed dermatologic examination, diascopy, and Wood's lamp evaluation. A skin biopsy was performed to rule out primary pigmentary and inflammatory disorders.



Figure 1. Dorsal aspect of both hands in the dependent position, showing multiple, symmetrically distributed pale macules indicated by arrows.

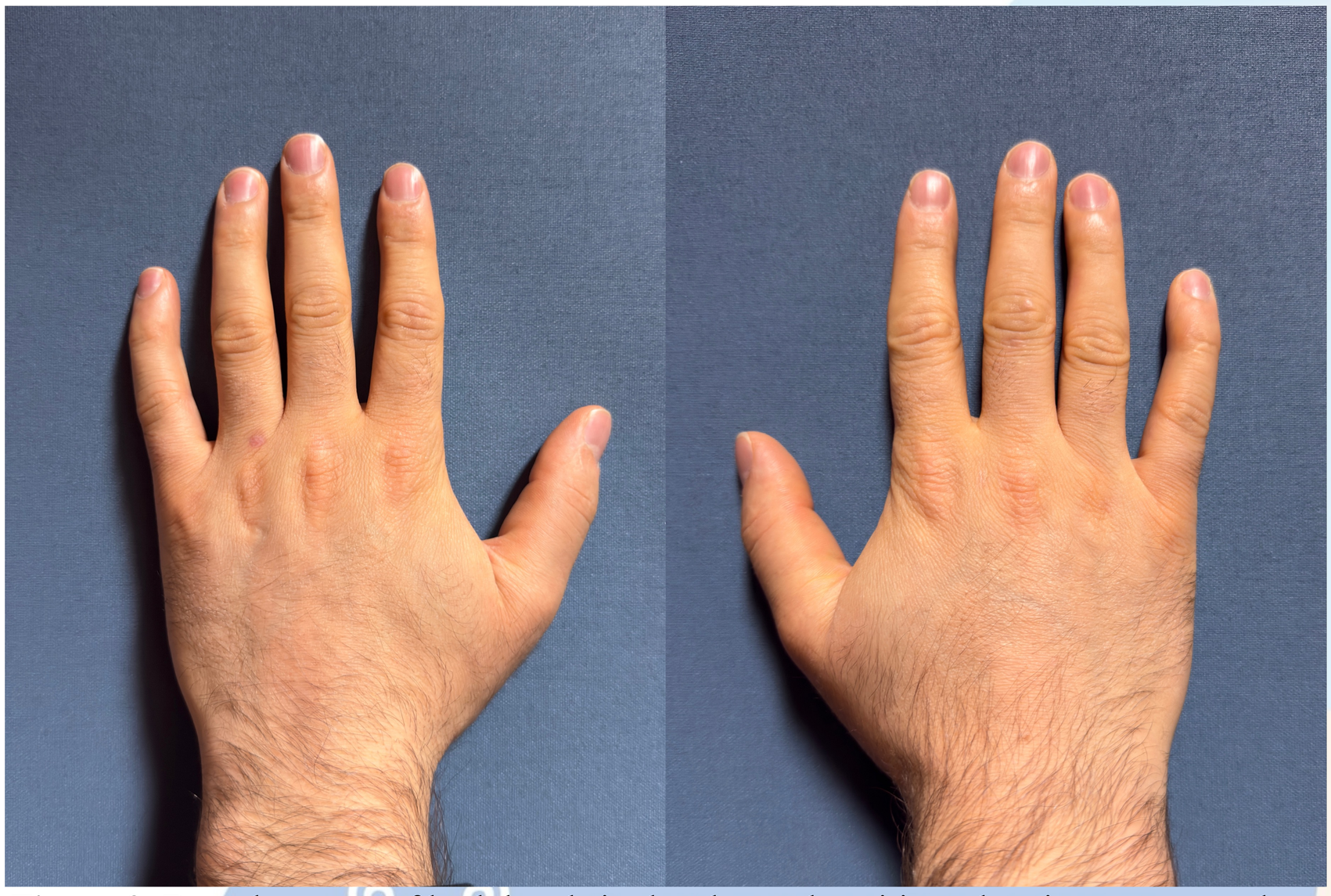


Figure 2. Dorsal aspects of both hands in the elevated position, showing near-complete disappearance of the macules.

Results

Clinical examination revealed multiple, well-defined pale macules symmetrically distributed over both hands. The lesions demonstrated striking positional variability, becoming more visible when the arms were lowered (dependent position) and fading markedly upon elevation (Figure 1, 2). They were non-scaly, blanchable, and became imperceptible on diascopy. Wood's lamp examination was negative. Histopathologic evaluation revealed mild hyperkeratosis and superficial perivascular infiltrate without fungal elements or pigmentary loss, supporting a vascular etiology rather than a pigmentary disorder.

Conclusion

The diagnosis of Bier spots relies on characteristic clinical features, particularly the disappearance of lesions with limb elevation. This simple maneuver distinguishes them from true hypopigmentation disorders, as confirmed by the lack of pigmentary changes in histopathology. Awareness of this benign condition allows clinicians to reassure patients and avoid unnecessary treatments or extensive workups.