



Perforation of paper with pen: Simple technique to explain the carpet tack sign in discoid lupus erythematosus

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CLINICAL CHALLENGE

Characteristic skin lesions in discoid lupus erythematosus are well-defined erythematous papules and plaques with partially adherent scales entering a patulous follicle. When scales are removed, their undersurface shows horny plugs that had previously occupied follicles. This clinical sign is described as the carpet tack sign, tin tack sign, or cat tongue sign (Fig 1).¹ It is also seen in seborrheic dermatitis¹ and pemphigus foliaceus.² Clinical signs with many metaphors are difficult to explain to residents.



Fig 1. Discoid lupus erythematosus adherent scale with similitude to signs carpet tack, cat tongue, and tin tacks.

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SOLUTION

An easy innovative method to demonstrate the mechanism or pathology behind the clinical sign is described. A white paper sheet is taken and multiple hits, and penetrations are made with a ball-point pen. When you see the under surface of the perforated paper, the torn extended paper part looks like a typical follicular extension of the undersurface of the scale, thus resembling tin tacks or carpet tacks (Fig 2). This easy and novel demonstration method is useful for helping residents and clinical dermatologists appreciate the clinical sign better.



Fig 2. Follicular extension of scales in discoid lupus erythematosus demonstrated with the perforated under surface of a paper.

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