

---

# Photo Quiz

## Large Growth on the Face

ALEKSANDAR JANKOVIĆ, MD, PhD, and IVANA BINIĆ, PhD, *Clinical Center Niš, Serbia*

GEORGI GOCEV, MD, PhD, *Clinical Center, Skopje, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*

The editors of *AFP* welcome submissions for Photo Quiz. Guidelines for preparing and submitting a Photo Quiz manuscript can be found in the Authors' Guide at <http://www.aafp.org/afp/photoquizinfo>. To be considered for publication, submissions must meet these guidelines. E-mail submissions to [afpphoto@aafp.org](mailto:afpphoto@aafp.org). Contributing editor for Photo Quiz is John E. Delzell, Jr., MD, MSPH.

A collection of Photo Quizzes published in *AFP* is available at <http://www.aafp.org/afp/photoquiz>.



A 78-year-old woman presented with a large growth on her face that had been present for 11 years. The lesion was located in the zygomatic region, a sun-damaged area with aged skin.

Physical examination showed a hard, elongated, gray to yellowish hyperkeratotic mass (*see accompanying figure*). The lesion was 7.2 cm in length with a base diameter of 0.7 cm.

### Question

Based on the patient's history and physical examination, which one of the following is the most likely diagnosis?

- A. Actinic keratosis.
- B. Cutaneous horn.
- C. Keratoacanthoma.
- D. Seborrheic keratosis.

See the following page for discussion.

**Discussion**

The answer is B: cutaneous horn. Cutaneous horn, or cornu cutaneum, refers to elongated, keratinous, gray to yellowish projections that range in size from a few millimeters to several centimeters.<sup>1</sup> The reason for retention of keratin is unknown. This is a rare clinical diagnosis, and the incidence and prevalence in the general population are unknown.<sup>1</sup> Cutaneous horns usually occur in light-skinned patients older than 50 years, and are more common in men.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 30 percent of cutaneous horns occur on the upper face and scalp. Other common locations include sun-exposed areas such as the ear, lip, chest, neck, and shoulder.<sup>1,2</sup>

Cutaneous horns occur in association with a wide variety of underlying benign, premalignant, and malignant diseases, such as keratosis, sebaceous molluscum, verruca, trichilemmal cyst, Bowen disease, squamous

cell carcinoma, malignant melanoma, and basal cell carcinoma.<sup>1-3</sup> To make a histologic diagnosis, the lesion should be biopsied at the base of the horn.<sup>3</sup> Cutaneous horns can be removed with simple excision using cauterization and cryosurgery.<sup>1,3</sup>

Actinic keratoses are hyperkeratotic lesions. They are usually multiple and comprised of either macules or papules with a rough, scaly surface resulting from disorganized keratinization and a variable degree of inflammation. Lesions vary from less than 1 mm to more than 2 cm, and are usually asymptomatic.<sup>3</sup>

Keratoacanthoma is composed of keratinizing squamous cells originating from pilosebaceous follicles. It is characterized by rapid growth to a relatively large size, and a regular crateriform shape with a keratotic plug and undamaged surrounding skin.<sup>3</sup>

Seborrheic keratoses are composed of epidermal keratinocytes, varying from a dirty yellow to black color with greasy keratin on the surface. The size can be from 1 mm to several centimeters.<sup>3</sup> They have a classic “stuck on” appearance.

*Address correspondence to Aleksandar Janković, MD, PhD, at jakesnaga@yahoo.com. Reprints are not available from the authors.*

Author disclosure: No relevant financial affiliations to disclose.

**REFERENCES**

1. Fernandes NF, Sinha S, Lambert WC, Schwartz RA. Cutaneous horn: a potentially malignant entity. *Acta Dermatovenerol Alp Panonica Adriat.* 2009;18(4):189-193.
2. Copcu E, Sivrioglu N, Culhaci N. Cutaneous horns: are these lesions as innocent as they seem to be? *World J Surg Oncol.* 2004;3(2):18.
3. Burns T, Breathnach S, Cox N, Griffiths C, eds. *Rook's Textbook of Dermatology.* 8th ed. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell; 2010. ■

Summary Table	
Condition	Characteristics
Actinic keratosis	Hyperkeratotic lesions, usually multiple; comprised of either macules or papules with a rough, scaly surface resulting from disorganized keratinization and a variable degree of inflammation; usually asymptomatic; less than 1 mm to more than 2 cm in size
Cutaneous horn	Elongated, keratinous, gray to yellowish projections; a few millimeters to several centimeters in size
Keratoacanthoma	Usually grows rapidly to a relatively large size; regular crateriform shape and keratotic plug with undamaged surrounding skin
Seborrheic keratosis	Composed of epidermal keratinocytes, varying from dirty yellow to black in color with greasy keratin on the surface; 1 mm to several centimeters in size