LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Conjunctival Pallor and the Presence of Anemia

To the Editor:—It is always gratifying to see articles that deal with and add to physical examination skills. The article entitled, "The Relation of Conjunctival Pallor to the Presence of Anemia" by Sheth et al. in the February 1997 issue of the *Journal* is a good case in point.¹ In addition to the pale conjunctiva seen in Figure 1, the sclera appears bluish. The use of a blue filter on the camera would explain that finding. However, if no filter was used, then the blue sclera is, in and of itself, a useful finding. Whereas the usual response by housestaff and medical students as to the cause of blue sclerae is "osteogenesis imperfecta," iron deficiency anemia is by far a more common cause. Other causes include rheumatoid arthritis, "true" collagen disorders such as Marfan syndrome, Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, pseudoxanthoma elasticum, and pseudopseudohypoparathyroidism. In fact, my own experience is that with very close observation under natural light, many normal individuals will have a slight bluish hue to the sclera. One must, therefore, be careful not to overinterpret this finding.—**YEHA Y. MISHRIKI, MD**, Penn State University College of Medicine and Lehigh Valley Hospital, Allentown, Pa.

REFERENCE

1. Sheth TN, Choudhry NK, Bowes M, Detsky AS. The relation of conjunctival pallor to the presence of anemia. *J. Gen Intern Med.* 1997; 12:102-6.

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