CLINICAL SNAPSHOT

Deep Burns from Nd:YAG Laser Treatment for Tattoo Removal

A 40-year-old woman presented with a 3-week history of the lesion depicted here. The cause was not malignancy or trauma; rather, the patient had undergone Nd:YAG laser treatment for removal of a black tattoo at an institution run by insufficiently qualified persons. At the correct settings, Nd:YAG laser is excellent for the treatment of black tattoos. It is crucial to use impulses in the nano- or picosecond range and to select an energy density appropriate for the skin type, the intensity of tattoo coloration, the beam diameter, and the wavelength. Detailed technical and medical expertise is required to set the parameters correctly, ensure safety, and exclude adventitious treatment of malignant skin lesions. In the case presented here, the energy level was far too high, leading to grade 2b burns. By the time the patient came to our department, the healing process had led to scarring. Around 10% of the German population have tattoos. It is estimated that 6% of those who get tattooed wish to have their tattoos professionally removed 10 to 15 years later.

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