CLINICAL SNAPSHOT

Skin Discoloration Following Total Knee Replacement

A 63-year-old man presented with bluish-livid discoloration of the skin over the knee joint. Fourteen years previously he had undergone primary knee replacement. Clinical examination revealed popliteal and prepatellar bluish-livid discoloration. Elsewhere this cutaneous discoloration had been interpreted as varicosis. Knee joint radiographs showed asymmetry of the joint space as a sign of polyethylene wear. Intraoperatively we found polyethylene wear with ensuing metallosis.

Conversion to a rotating hinge knee prosthesis was performed. The patient was discharged 9 days after surgery. Total knee replacement is generally a successful procedure with survival rates of at least 10 to 15 years. Polyethylene wear is a known late complication necessitating revision. However, cutaneous discoloration has not previously been described as the first sign of polyethylene wear with ensuing metallosis.

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