

# What about this finger?

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## CASE REPORT

A 62-year-old woman reported having episodes of sudden, spontaneous painful dark discolouration of her right middle finger. Such episodes had been occurring for a few years, with a frequency of once per 4-6 months, lasting 3-5 days on average. Elsewhere, she had been given a diagnosis of 'atypical Raynaud syndrome', but later on, another physician suspected arterial embolism and recommended invasive angiography of the aortic arch and brachial arteries. She declined, and asked to be referred for a second opinion.

## WHAT IS YOUR DIAGNOSIS?

See page 433 for the answer to this photo quiz.

Figure 1.



The story this patient told is compatible with Achenbach syndrome, or 'paroxysmal finger haematoma'. Her physical examination at that time, including blood pressure, arterial pulsations, finger capillary refill and Allen test, was perfectly normal. No additional tests were ordered, but we requested her to come and see us to show her finger during an episode. She did not do this, but a few months later, she sent this picture by e-mail from her vacation address in southern France (*figure 1*).

The history as well as the image is typical of paroxysmal finger haematoma. This is a benign, idiopathic disorder, which has been described in the medical literature since the early 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Its prevalence is unknown, but appears to be highest in middle-aged women. Characteristically, there is bruising of the volar side of a finger, which occurs either spontaneously or after minor trauma. Its pathogenesis is unknown.<sup>2</sup>

Paroxysmal finger haematoma is rarely recognised immediately by clinicians, and unnecessary additional tests, including invasive procedures such as angiograph, may be ordered.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1.** Paroxysmal finger haematoma (Achenbach's syndrome)



## REFERENCES

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3. Eikenboom JC, Cannegieter SC, Briët E. Paroxysmal finger haematoma: a neglected syndrome. *Thromb Haemost.* 1991;66:266.