

Opinion Article

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A Blue Hand

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Introduction

A 41-year-old woman who was employed as a nurse complained of left-hand pain and discoloration for one day. She initially claimed that she had injected lidocaine into her arm in order to treat herself for carpal tunnel but later admitted to injecting six oxycodone tablets ground and dissolved in tap water into her left antecubital space. The injection site was visible over her brachial arterial pulsation. Her left hand was blue and cool to the touch with delayed capillary refill despite having palpable radial and ulnar arterial pulses (Image 1). Nitroglycerin paste was applied to her hand, an intravenous heparin infusion was initiated and she

was admitted to vascular surgery. After three days, her hand was normal in color except for the nail beds which remained blue. She had normal motor function of the hand and was discharged home. She returned one month later with necrotic fingertips of all digits requiring amputation (Image 2 and 3).

Conflicting Interest

None.

Acknowledgement

None.



Image 1: Photograph of her hands at the initial visit showing the blue cyanosis of her left hand (she injected the dissolved pills into her left brachial artery) compared to her normal pink appearing right hand.



Image 2: Photographs of her left hand (palmar and dorsal views) when she returned to the hospital several weeks later showing tissue necrosis of her fingertips.



Image 3: Photographs of her left hand (palmar and dorsal views) when she returned to the hospital several weeks later showing tissue necrosis of her fingertips.