

Image of Month August 2009: Tattoos and the ED

["tattoo", the skin markings, not the military signal, later a drumbeat < *tatu*, a Polynesian word meaning the skin markings of a tattoo, thanks to Captain Cook, 1769]

Answer #1: This is a tattoo of the character Pinhead in the movie Hellraiser



Answer #2: A Nazi prison camp tattoo identification number on the forearm of an elderly (mid-80's) Jewish Holocaust survivor.

This practice, which originated in Auschwitz, was particularly offensive to Jews, violating an OT injunction against tattoos (Leviticus, Chapter 19: verse 28):

28: Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD

She could be no younger than ~ 75 obviously, and would likely be 85-100 years old.

The mother-in-law of a physician, this patient originally came from an Eastern European country and received the tattoo there (I did not ask personal questions regarding which camp, et cet.) and is Jewish. Her husband, who accompanied her, had one on his left volar forearm as well!

For an astounding story (?true - an Israeli friend of mine is not sure but says that he's heard even more amazing stories concerning Holocaust survivors and chance), please read:

http://www.jewishworldreview.com/hillel/hillel_2003_07_18

Answer #3: This waitress used her tattoo as a medi-alert bracelet!

I had not seen this before. If you see this on patient, or similar disease identification, it may be serving similar purpose. According to references below, this is a growing practice that many medical providers deplore for its inferior ability to communicate important information compared to conventional medical bracelets.

Answer #4: Tattoo as (forensic) identification.

We had an unfortunate young person whom we could only identify, initially, by description of tattoos by family over the telephone. I did not use that patient's tattoo but used one from the internet (see below).

Answer #5: Ethnobotanical tattooing of gingiva, as seen in patient (not mine and not in our ED) from Ethiopia, for analgesia using *Datura stramonium*. (see Brooks and Reynolds reference, including online full text, below)

References

Tattoo #1: Pinhead:

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0093177/>

Tattoo #2: Holocaust tattooing:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10007056>

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/tattoos1.html>

<http://www.economicexpert.com/a/Ka:tzetnik.htm>

Tattoo #3: Tattoo as medical alert bracelet:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2009-05-13-medicaltattoos_N.htm

see image from this site immediately below:



another article:

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/DiabetesResource/story?id=4028385&page=1>

Tattoo #4: Tattooing used as (forensic) identification:

the site of this photo I used:

<http://www.helpfindthemissing.org/forum/showthread.php?t=10312>

Other forensic tattoo references:

Amatuzio J. The meaning of the mark: the fascinating forensic aspects of tattoos. *Minn Med.* 2004 Mar;87(3):22-5.

Komar D, Lathrop S. Tattoo types and frequencies in New Mexican white hispanics and white non-hispanics: autopsy data from homicidal and accidental deaths, 2002-2005. *Am J Forensic Med Pathol.* 2008 Dec;29(4):285-9.

Kringsholm B, Jakobsen J, Sejrsen B, Gregersen M. Unidentified bodies/skulls found in Danish waters in the period 1992-1996. *Forensic Sci Int.* 2001 Dec;123(2-3):150-8.

Orr DL 2nd, Rawson RD. The identification of juveniles by means of mucosal tattooing. *Quintessence Int.* 1985 Feb;16(2):151-3.

Tattoo #5: Ethnobotanical tattooing:

Brooks JK, Reynolds MA. Ethnobotanical tattooing of the gingiva: literature review and report of a case. *J Am Dent Assoc.* 2007 Aug;138(8):1097-101.

Online full text: <http://jada.ada.org/cgi/content/full/138/8/1097>

Other medicine-tattoo references:

Tattoos and anesthesia considerations:

Kuczkowski KM. Controversies in labor: lumbar tattoo and labor analgesia. *Arch Gynecol Obstet.* 2005 Feb;271(2):187.

Mercier FJ, Bonnet MP. Tattooing and various piercing: anaesthetic considerations. *Curr Opin Anaesthesiol.* 2009 Jun;22(3):436-441.

Tattooing and dermatology

Kazandjieva J, Tsankov N. Tattoos: dermatological complications. *Clin Dermatol.* 2007 Jul-Aug;25(4):375-82.