

# Clinical picture

QJM

## Erythema ab igne

### Case report

An 11-year-old girl was examined at our paediatric dermatologic service for a diffuse reticulated hyperpigmentation on her lower back, which had appeared 2 months before (Figure 1). The lesions did not show any type of desquamation and were asymptomatic. On further questioning, the girl revealed the use of a specific warming massage infrared machine once or twice per day for prolonged period of 1 h to reduce the symptoms related to her lower back pain. On these bases, we concluded for a diagnosis of erythema ab igne. Erythema ab igne is a skin reaction caused by chronic exposure to low level of infrared radiation in the form of heat.<sup>1</sup> This condition was first described by Buschke in the early 1900s and it was fairly common in the elderly who stood or sat closely to open fires or electric space heaters, or connected to the prolonged use of heating pads. Recently, only reports of laptop-induced erythema ab igne on the thighs and one case attributed to the automobile seat heater have been described.<sup>2,3</sup> Clinically it presents as a hyperpigmented livedo reticularis-like lesions and the distribution of skin involvement should mirror the heat source in question.<sup>4</sup> The pigmentation may persist for severe months or also years and the treatment consists in the removal of the source of chronic heat exposure. Treatment with topical tretinoin or laser may improve the clinical appearance.<sup>5</sup>

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**Figure 1.** Hyperpigmented reticular lesions on the lower back.

*Conflict of interest:* None declared.

### References

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