

Clinical Image

Dactylitis as an Early Onset of Sickle Cell Disease Pain

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A 12-month-old child with homozygous sickle cell disease diagnosed at birth consulted at the hospital because of limited manual dexterity and crying out in apparent pain for a few days. No other symptom was referred. A previous medical assessment had been unremarkable. On physical examination, the patient was stable, afebrile, with normal vital signs. He had swelling on the dorsal aspect of the right hand with no other signs of inflammation. The remaining exam was uneventful. A radiographic examination revealed a periosteal reaction at the 3rd and 5th metacarpal bones. A diagnosis of dactylitis was made and the child was treated with oral analgesics, anti-inflammatories and hydration at home.

Dactylitis are episodes of vaso-occlusive pain in small bones of the hands and feet that develop in children during the first 4 years of life, before the haematopoietic tissue in these locations is replaced by fibrous connective tissue and fat. Osteomyelitis should be considered in the differential diagnosis.



Figure: