

The Bra Sign in Breast Cancer

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PEAU D'ORANGE, caused by cutaneous lymphatic edema, is described in most textbooks as a clinical feature of breast cancer,¹ although it is a late manifestation of the disease. We have noticed in several cases that the bra leaves more pronounced marks on the skin of the affected breasts in women with breast cancer. This occurs in the presence of peau d'orange but also occurs, in many cases, before this late sign occurs. Bras and other clothing often leave visual impressions on the skin in normal people. Socks, in particular, leave an impression on the leg, and the impression is more obvious on a leg with edema than it is on the contralateral limb. Closely fitting bras have become popular for support, accentuation of cleavage, and other cosmetic reasons, and bras often leave obvious skin impressions in normal people. In the presence of cutaneous breast edema, it should not be surprising, therefore, that the bra impressions are more evident on the side with breast cancer. We know that skin thickening as a result of edema is a mammographic feature of malignancy.

Dunkley et al.² documented that skin thickening seen on a mammogram is recognized long before cutaneous edema becomes clinically evident. In 24% of their breast cancer patients, skin thickening was recognizable mammographically, but in 68% of that group, there was no cutaneous edema on clinical examination. Thus, the bra sign will occur much ear-

lier than peau d'orange and has the advantage of being easily recognized by the vigilant patient or clinician. If this sign is noticed, thorough investigation to exclude breast cancer should be pursued.

Disclosure Statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to report.

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