CLINICAL IMAGES

Subungual Hematoma in the Mountains

Two physicians were camped at 3712 m on New Army Pass in the Sierra Nevada in 2015 when the neonatologist smashed his fourth right fingernail while moving a rock, developing an instantaneous subungual hematoma (Figure 1). Pain was surprisingly limited, so evacuation of the blood was delayed until the next morning. Although a wilderness text¹ describes twirling a needle to drill a hole, a needle was not available, and the other method is more entertaining. An all-purpose wire paperclip was straightened, heated until red hot on a camp stove, and punched through the nail by the endocrinologist author. The procedure produced an ejection and impressively complete evacuation of blood from under the nail, after which a small bandage was placed. Two days

later there was seepage of nonpurulent serous fluid from the damaged nail bed through the puncture hole (Figure 2). Both physicians continued on into the Miter Basin and eventually to Mt Whitney at 4421 m.

Harvey V. Lankford, MD
Richmond, VA

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

Reference

1. Auerbach PS, ed. *Wilderness Medicine*. 6th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2012.