

Upper Limb Disorders

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A simple test to distinguish between primary and secondary Raynaud's Phenomenon (RP). The authors define primary RP as that related to dysregulation of the autonomous nervous system and secondary as connective tissue disease. Primary RP may be caused by negligent exposure (e.g. vibration), secondary usually not.

26 clinical referees were examined either by ophthalmoscope or stereo microscope for signs of abnormality in the nailfold capillaries. Signs were recorded and compared with the findings of full examination, which included final diagnosis made by experienced rheumatologist - based on history, physical exam, autoantibody screening and arterial oscillography of all fingers.

Differentiation between primary and secondary RP was just as accurate using the hand held ophthalmoscope as with the stereo microscope.

Comment

Differentiation between primary and secondary RP is of value in assessing claims and would be of value in the workplace setting as part of a screening programme. However, the average length of reported symptoms among this group was 8 years, making it of little value as a screening/preventive tool if early intervention is required. There were no normal controls in this study.

It would be interesting (both for understanding of causation and establishing a duty of care) if this simple/cheap technique were to be tested in an industrial cohort that included exposed and unexposed groups. Such a study may be prompted by this work.