

## Avian-Inspired Analogies in Dermatology

### Introduction

In dermatology, avian analogies creatively describe various skin conditions, using familiar poultry imagery to illustrate distinct phenomena. Terms like “chicken skin” and “fried egg” serve as vivid mnemonic devices, helping clinicians and patients understand and identify skin disorders. Each analogy captures specific visual patterns or clinical features, linking skin conditions to relatable avian images. This enhances communication of dermatological concepts and enriches the diagnostic process, providing a memorable framework for recognizing and categorizing skin conditions. The bird-related analogies in dermatology, along with their associated conditions, are shown in Table 1.

### Bird like facies

The term “bird-like facies” describes a distinct facial appearance characterized by a small face, thin, beaked nose, recessed chin, high-arched cleft palate, micrognathia, and glossoptosis. This presentation is observed in conditions such as Hutchinson-Gilford progeria syndrome, Hellerman-Streiff syndrome, Nijmegen breakage syndrome, familial partial lipodystrophy, Cockayne syndrome, and Werner syndrome.<sup>[1-3]</sup>

### BLEND TAN EGG

The malignancies eccrine spiradenoma, neuroma, glomus tumor, leiomyoma, angiolioma, neurilemmoma, and dermatofibroma are frequently referred to by the acronym ENGLAND or GLEND. Granular cell tumor and endometrioma were added to the acronym “LEND AN EGG.” Now that tufted angioma and blue rubber bleb nevus have been added to this list, the acronym is “BLEND TAN EGG.”<sup>[4]</sup>

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### Chicken skin

“Chicken skin” in dermatology usually refers to a disorder called keratosis pilaris [Figure 1]. Commonly occurring on the upper arms, thighs, cheeks, and buttocks, keratosis pilaris is a benign skin condition that is characterized by small, rough, follicular-centric keratotic papules caused by keratin-blocking hair follicles that give a stippled appearance resembling gooseflesh, goosebumps, or chicken skin.<sup>[5]</sup>

### Chickenpox

Chickenpox [Figure 2] is an infection caused by the varicella-zoster virus. The condition is characterized by an itchy, blister-like rash, fever, and general malaise. Chickenpox primarily affects children but can also occur in adults.<sup>[6]</sup>

### Chicken wire appearance/pattern

#### Direct immunofluorescence

The “chicken wire” appearance is a term used in dermatopathology to describe a distinctive pattern observed in direct immunofluorescence microscopy of skin biopsies, revealing a “chicken wire” or “net-like” pattern of IgG and complement component C3 deposits around the surface of the epidermal cells in cases of pemphigus.<sup>[7]</sup>

#### Dermoscopy

A diagnostic characteristic of plexiform neurofibromas, a type of neurofibroma frequently observed in neurofibromatosis type 1, is its “chicken wire mesh” appearance on dermoscopy. Because of the underlying nerve fibers and the fibrous stroma of the tumor, dermoscopy shows it as a network of tiny, connected lines or grids on the tumor’s surface.<sup>[8]</sup>

### Chicken wire erythema

“Chicken wire erythema” is a description used in dermatology to characterize

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#### Access this article online

**Website:** <https://journals.lww.com/idoj>

**DOI:** 10.4103/idoj.idoj\_1039\_24

#### Quick Response Code:



**How to cite this article:** Srinivasan MT, Pavithran T, Logamoorthy R, Karthikeyan K. Avian-inspired analogies in dermatology. Indian Dermatol Online J 2025;16:435-9.

**Received:** 16-Oct-2024. **Revised:** 27-Oct-2024.

**Accepted:** 17-Nov-2024. **Published:** 15-Apr-2025.

**Table 1: Summarizing the bird-related analogies in dermatology, along with the associated conditions**

Bird related terms	Associated Conditions
Bird-like facies	Hutchinson-Gilford progeria syndrome, Hellerman-Streiff syndrome, Nijmegen breakage syndrome, Cockayne syndrome, Werner syndrome
Blend Tan Egg	Blue rubber bleb nevus, Leiomyoma, Eccrine spiradenoma, Neuroma, Dermatofibroma, Tufted angioma, Angiolipoma, Neurilemmoma, Endometrioma, Granular cell tumor, and Glomus tumor
Chicken skin	Keratosis pilaris
Chicken pox	Varicella
Chicken wire appearance	a. Direct immunofluorescence – Pemphigus vulgaris b. Dermoscopy – Plexiform neurofibroma c. Clinical morphology – Erythema marginatum
Crow's feet	Aging
Eggshell nails	Calcium or iron deficiency, rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, hypothyroidism
Fried egg appearance	a. Trichoscopy – Scalp pemphigus b. Histopathology – Mast cells c. Clinical morphology – Dysplastic nevus
Goose skin	Traumatic anserine folliculitis
Owl's eye appearance	Verruca plana, Hodgkin lymphoma (Reed-Sternberg cells), cytomegalovirus infection
Parrot beak nose	Apert syndrome, systemic sclerosis, Crouzon syndrome
Parrot beak nails	Cocaine abuse, systemic sclerosis
Plucked chicken skin	Pseudoxanthoma elasticum
Pseudoparalysis of Parrot	Congenital syphilis
Stork bite	Nevus simplex (salmon patch)
Swan neck deformity	Rheumatoid arthritis, hand deformities in leprosy
Turkey ear	Sarcoidosis, lupus vulgaris, leprosy
Turkey gobbler neck	Aging
Ugly duckling sign	Melanoma, atypical moles

a net-like or reticulated pattern of erythema seen in conditions like erythema marginatum. Erythema marginatum is a skin manifestation primarily associated with acute rheumatic fever and is sometimes linked with other conditions like infections or autoimmune diseases.<sup>[9]</sup>

#### Chicken wire pattern

The clinical word “reticulate” is frequently employed to describe skin lesions that have a “net-like,” “sieve-like,” or “chicken wire” configuration. This pattern of skin lesions is seen in several congenital and acquired dermatoses, as well as a few systemic disorders.<sup>[10]</sup>



**Figure 1: Clinical image showing keratosis pilaris, characterized by multiple keratotic follicular papules on the upper outer aspect of the left arm. The papules are small, rough, and skin-colored, giving a “chicken skin” appearance**

#### Crow's feet

Crow's feet, also known as lateral canthal lines, are wrinkles that extend from the lateral canthus to the temples. They result from various factors, including the action of the orbicularis oculi muscle, loss of skin elasticity, age-related skin changes, and photoaging. Crow's feet are among the most common facial wrinkles.<sup>[11]</sup>

#### Eggshell nails

Eggshell nails, also known as hapalonychia, are characterized by thin, fragile, and concave nails that resemble the appearance of an eggshell. This condition can be associated with various systemic diseases and nutritional deficiencies, such as calcium or iron deficiency, rheumatoid arthritis or systemic lupus erythematosus, hypothyroidism, and trauma to the nails.<sup>[12]</sup>

#### Fried egg appearance

##### Trichoscopy

The “fried egg” appearance is a distinctive trichoscopic finding observed in scalp pemphigus, particularly pemphigus vulgaris. It is a well-defined, round, and sometimes irregularly shaped lesion with a central hair follicle surrounded by a pale,



hypopigmented halo. The central follicle can appear as a dark spot or a dot, resembling the yolk of an egg, surrounded by a lighter zone akin to the egg white.<sup>[13]</sup>

### Histopathology

Mast cells can be detected in tiny quantities (up to 10 mast cells per 40× area) in the dermis near blood vessels and in greater quantities in some neoplasms [such as neurofibroma [Figure 3] and mastocytosis. Often oval, these cells have a dark, round nucleus in the center, giving them the appearance of a “fried egg.”<sup>[14]</sup>

### Clinical

Dysplastic nevi are typically larger than ordinary nevi, measuring over 5 mm in diameter. They often exhibit multiple colors, including shades of light brown, dark brown, and pink. Characteristically, they present a “fried egg” appearance, with a darker, raised central papule surrounded by a lighter, flat macular area.<sup>[15]</sup>

### Goose skin

The name “traumatic anserine folliculitis” comes from the clinical image of an anserine look (goose skin-like) with



**Figure 2:** Clinical image depicting multiple chickenpox (varicella) lesions on the back. The lesions are in various stages, including red macules, vesicles, and crusted papules, distributed diffusely across the skin

follicular papules [Figure 4] and the causative etiologic factor (pressure or friction). Due to their sensitive skin and increased susceptibility to stress and friction, children and teenagers are the most common age groups to have the ailment.<sup>[16]</sup>

### Owl’s eye appearance

The “owl’s eye” appearance, identified in conditions like verruca plana and Hodgkin lymphoma histopathology, refers to the nuclei of vacuolated cells surrounded by empty shells. It can also describe Reed-Sternberg cells, which are bi- or multi-lobed. Additionally, this pattern is observed as inclusion bodies in cytomegalovirus infection.<sup>[14]</sup>

### Parrot beak nose

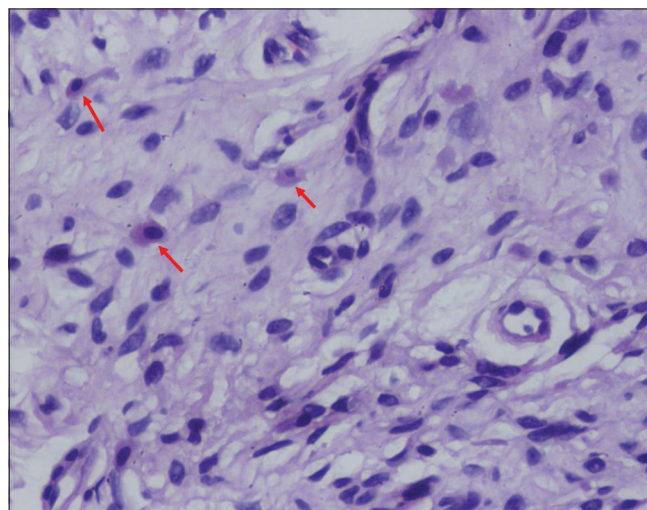
“Parrot beak nose,” also known as psittichorhina, refers to a prominent nasal deformity characterized by a large dorsal hump and a low, downward-tilted nasal tip. This feature is often due to a short and narrow maxilla and is seen in conditions like Apert syndrome, systemic sclerosis, and Crouzon syndrome.<sup>[17-19]</sup>

### Parrot beak nail

“Parrot beak nails” are characterized by an excessive forward curvature of the free edge of the fingernails and toenails. This condition can be associated with cocaine use and systemic sclerosis.<sup>[20]</sup>

### Plucked chicken skin

“Plucked chicken skin” is a term used informally to characterize the skin’s appearance in cases of Groenblad-Strandberg syndrome or pseudoxanthoma elasticum [Figure 5]. The gradual calcification and fragmentation of elastic fibers are its defining features,



**Figure 3:** Hematoxylin and eosin (H and E) stained section at 400x magnification, showing spindle-shaped cells with elongated, wavy nuclei, characteristic of neurofibroma. Mast cells with a distinctive “fried egg” appearance (red arrow) is interspersed within the myxoid stroma

resulting in loose, wrinkled skin that has a “plucked chicken skin” appearance.<sup>[21]</sup>

### *Pseudoparalysis of Parrot*

“Pseudoparalysis of the Parrot” describes reduced limb movement in infants caused by local periostitis and severe pain, which are early indicators of congenital syphilis. Radiologically, it appears as transverse, saw-tooth, dense bands due to altered mineralization at the zone of provisional calcification.<sup>[22]</sup>

### *Stork bite*

A stork bite, also known as nevus simplex or salmon patch, is a common birthmark seen in newborns. It appears as a pink or reddish patch, typically found on the back of the neck, forehead, eyelids, or between the eyebrows. The name “stork bite” comes from old folklore that storks bring babies, and the mark resembles a peck from the bird’s beak.<sup>[23]</sup>

### *Swan neck deformity*

Swan neck deformity is characterized by hyperextension of the proximal interphalangeal joint and flexion of the distal interphalangeal joint, along with reciprocal flexion of the metacarpophalangeal joint. This deformity results from an imbalance in the extensor mechanism of the digit. It is commonly associated with conditions such as



**Figure 4:** Clinical image showing multiple, grouped, discrete, tiny, skin-colored follicular papules on the right cheek, suggestive of traumatic anserine folliculitis. The lesions resemble “goose skin,” presenting as rough, small bumps around the hair follicles

rheumatoid arthritis and hand deformities due to leprosy, where damage to the connective tissues and muscles leads to the disruption of the normal alignment and function of the joints.<sup>[24]</sup>

### *Turkey ear*

“Turkey ear” is a descriptive term traditionally used for lupus perniosis involving the earlobe, a skin manifestation of sarcoidosis. However, the clinical appearance of lupus vulgaris on the earlobe can be similar to that of lupus perniosis. Therefore, the term “Turkey ear” may also be appropriately used to describe lupus vulgaris affecting the earlobe.<sup>[25]</sup>

### *Turkey gobbler neck*

The “turkey gobbler” deformity, or “turkey neck,” is characterized by sagging skin, excess fat, and prominent muscle bands under the chin and along the neck. It occurs due to a combination of skin laxity, submental fat accumulation, and changes in the platysma muscle. Aging leads to reduced skin elasticity, causing it to droop, while fat deposits under the chin add to the fullness. The platysma muscle, which normally provides structural support, can become lax and develop vertical bands as its fibers separate and diverge over time. This muscle relaxation and banding disrupt the smooth neck contour, contributing to the “turkey gobbler” appearance.<sup>[26]</sup>

### *Ugly duckling sign*

A change to the ABCDE rule combines the advantages of this rule with the “ugly duckling sign.” The ABCDEF rule, which patients can use to assess their moles at home, neatly combines the “ugly duckling rule” with the addition of the letter “F,” which stands for “Funny looking.” Similar to the “ugly duckling sign,” the “funny looking” mole suggests that there is an overwhelming sense that a location is suspect for melanoma.<sup>[27]</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The use of avian-inspired analogies in dermatology offers a creative and effective means of conveying complex



**Figure 5:** Clinical image showing numerous firm, round-to-oval, yellowish, non-follicular papules, each a few millimeters in diameter, coalescing into plaques with a symmetric distribution around the neck and axilla. This appearance is characteristic of pseudoxanthoma elasticum, often described as resembling “plucked chicken skin”

dermatological concepts. As dermatology continues to evolve, such imaginative descriptors remain a valuable tool in both education and practice, ensuring that the nuances of skin pathology are communicated with clarity and precision.

### *Declaration of patient consent*

The authors certify that they have obtained all appropriate patient consent forms. In the form the patient(s) has/have given his/her/their consent for his/her/their images and other clinical information to be reported in the journal. The patients understand that their names and initials will not be published and due efforts will be made to conceal their identity, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

### *Financial support and sponsorship*

Nil.

### *Conflicts of interest*

There are no conflicts of interest.

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