EXCESS SKIN FOLLOWING WEIGHT LOSS: CUTIS PLEONASMUS
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Sir:

The excess skin that remains after weight loss is a unique problem of both cosmetic and functional significance. The term cutis pleonasmus is proposed for this heretofore unnamed condition.

As defined by Stedman’s Medical Dictionary, the word pleonasm is derived from the Greek pleonasmos, which means exaggeration or excessive, and cutis is Latin for skin. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary identifies the Latin pleonasmus as arising from the Greek pleon, meaning more. Furthermore, Stedman’s Medical Dictionary defines a disease as being characterized by at least two of the following criteria: a recognized etiologic agent, an identifiable group of signs and symptoms, and consistent anatomical alterations. By these criteria, cutis pleonasmus is a legitimate disease entity.

Cutis pleonasmus is clearly distinguished from cutis laxa, or loose skin, a rare connective tissue disease manifested in part by skin hanging in folds. It is appropriate that this condition obtain its name in a plastic surgery journal, since plastic surgeons provide the essential surgical treatment for those so afflicted. Establishment of the term cutis pleonasmus will facilitate communication between clinicians (e.g., a patient with cutis pleonasmus of the arms, abdomen, and medial thighs). It will also help our patients, already physically stigmatized by the disease, by providing them with a more discreet means of describing their condition.