

# ***Keep your keratoses (an ode to the seborrheic straggler)***



Illustration by Steve Derrick

I'll take your dark and changing nevi,  
And this bleeding nodule here,  
That suspicious pearly bump,  
Which has grown behind your ear.  
But these little waxy passengers  
Really are no cause for fear.  
Keep your keratoses,  
Time has placed them here.

Some might itch or catch, I'll grant you  
And for those we'll show concern.  
And the ones which are actinic  
Will be dealt with in their turn  
But these other kindred blotches  
Don't deserve a freeze or burn.  
Keep your keratoses,  
They are badges that you earn.

I'll prescribe a soothing cream  
To relieve that itchy patch,  
Or an immune-based injection  
To control that chronic rash.  
But these legion harmless spots  
Are no broad malignant cache.  
Keep your keratoses,  
Nature's epidermal thatch.

Though they weren't there when you were twenty,  
Still they're doing you no harm.  
Unbidden birthday gifts  
Perhaps devoid of grace and charm.  
Though you may not like their presence,  
There is no reason for alarm.  
Please keep your keratoses  
That adorn your back and arm.

If I tried to freeze the lot of these  
We'd both be here all day.  
It would be a fraught ambition  
For which insurance would not pay.  
The unmitigated truth,  
You'll just get others anyway.  
Keep your keratoses  
Let these harmless critters stay.

Spots of wisdom and maturity  
Upon your skin so rife.  
Barnacles of keratin  
That bedeck this ship of life.

— Hobart Walling, MD, PhD