A Case of Giant Advanced Sebaceous Gland Carcinoma

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Abstract Sebaceous carcinoma is a highly aggressive, potentially lethal tumour arising from the sebaceous glands in the skin. It accounts for 3.2 % of all malignant skin tumours. An advanced case of sebaceous carcinoma with distant metastasis is very rare as most of them present in the periocular area and are easily visible. We present an elderly woman who presented with two large fungating exophytic masses over the right parotid/orbital region and right side of neck. FNAC showed cytological features suggestive of poorly differentiated carcinoma which on histopathological exam confirmed it to be sebaceous carcinoma. Unfortunately the patient succumbed to cardiac arrest before initiation of treatment. This is the largest case of sebaceous gland carcinoma of eyelid reported in the medical literature, confirming the local aggressive behavior of the tumor and highlighting the importance of early diagnosis.

Keywords Sebaceous gland carcinoma · Eyelid tumor

A 55 year old female presented with history of swelling in front of right lower eyelid that began 3 years back that gradually progressed to involve the whole of the right eye

leading to complete loss of vision. Over last 1 year another swelling was noticed over the right side of face which gradually involved the whole of the right side of neck, associated with copious, foul smelling, purulent discharge mixed with blood. Local examination revealed two exophytic, pinkish fungating masses one in the right orbital region measuring 9×8 cm and the other in the right side of neck below right ear measuring 16×12 cm. Both had non-homogenous soft to firm consistency. Large areas of ulceration and necrotic slough were noted with foul smelling discharge (Fig. 1). A few dilated veins were noted in the upper chest. There was no history of trauma, radiotherapy or any previous eye operation. Patient was found to be severely anaemic with a haemoglobin percentage of 4.8 gm%. All other routine blood investigations along with liver and renal functions were also normal.

Chest X ray revealed a solitary coin shaped opacity in right lower zone suggesting metastasis. USG abdomen showed hepatomegaly. FNAC showed tumour cells in clusters and scattered fragments. Individual tumour cells showed irregular hyperchromatic nuclei with conspicuous nucleoli and moderate amount of cytoplasm with vacuoles suggestive of a poorly differentiated carcinoma (Fig. 2) and with special fat stains to be sebaceous carcinoma. CT scan of neck revealed a large, irregular, heterogenous mass lesion over the orbital region (Fig. 3). Based on history, clinical and histopathological findings a diagnosis of sebaceous gland carcinoma of right lower eyelid was made. Unfortunately patient died of cardiac arrest before initiation of the treatment.

Sebaceous gland carcinoma (SCG) is a rare eyelid tumor. It is highly malignant with a mortality rate second only to malignant melanoma [1]. SGC is more frequent in women

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Fig. 1 Clinical presentation showing two large fungating exophytic masses

than in men and affects an older population, usually in the 6th to 7th decade of life [2, 3]. The tumor mimics histopathologically with basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and malignant melanoma. The tumor may spread regionally into the lacrimal, secretory and excretory systems, to regional lymph nodes, and rarely disseminate hematogenously [4]. Surgery has been and remains the primary treatment modality for sebaceous gland carcinoma [5], but in view of such extensive lesions and distant metastasis patient was being considered for radiotherapy.

Fig. 2 Photomicrograph of the lesion

Fig. 3 CT Scan image of the lesion

This is a report of an advanced sebaceous gland carcinoma with deep orbital extension. An early diagnosis and appropriate treatment may decrease the long term morbidity and extend the survival rate of such patients. This is the largest case of sebaceous gland carcinoma of eyelid reported in the medical literature, confirming the local aggressive behavior of the tumor and highlighting the importance of early diagnosis.

Competing interests None known.

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