

Different Carcinomas of the Ears in an Albino

Wilson IB Onuigbo^{1*} and Jimmy C Nwozo²

¹*Department of Pathology, Orthopaedic Hospital, Enugu, Nigeria*

²*Department of Plastic Surgery, Orthopaedic Hospital, Enugu, Nigeria.*

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ABSTRACT

A world recognized pattern is the tendency for albinos to suffer sunlight induced cancer. The head is held to be the commonest site. Therefore, one question arises as to how a double organ like the ear fares. The simple answer is that one ear may be involved; later, the other could be affected. However, for the one ear to be attacked by a particular growth and the other ear to be involved by a different growth must be uncommon. Therefore, its occurrence is described in this paper with special reference to squamous cell carcinoma and basal cell carcinoma.

Keywords: Skin, Albino, Ear, Squamous cell carcinoma, Basal cell carcinoma, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The skin is commonly the seat of sunlight induced cancer [1]. Another common finding is the selection of the head [2]. Therefore, what happens to the ears?

From Oman [3], a group reported on squamous cell carcinoma of the external auditory canal. From Tanzania [4], this type was the commonest histopathologic type in 75% of cases. In an African man from Guinea [5], who went to New York, his left leg showed squamous cell carcinoma in situ. Hence, could this earliest type be seen in the ear? In this context, we present an albino who had the squamous cell type in the one ear and the basal cell type in the other. This odd combination deserves documentation.

CASE REPORTS

1. JO, a 45 year old man, an albino, attended the Orthopaedic Hospital, Enugu, on 17th August, 1984, with the complaint of chronic ulcer on the helix of the right ear. He was seen by Dr. Nwozo. This lesion was biopsied. It measured 2 cm across. On microscopy, individual cell keratinization with pearl formation was indicative of Squamous Cell Carcinoma.
2. JO, the above man, returned on 14th December, 1984 and was seen again by Dr. Nwozo. This time, there was a nodular lesion on the left helix of about 3 months duration. This was also biopsied. On microscopy, the growth showed malignant palisading of the basal cells unlike the previous biopsy. This indicated Basal Cell Carcinoma.

DISCUSSION

Yakubu and Mabogunje, who worked in another part of Nigeria, concluded that “squamous cell carcinoma was the most common tumour type, in contrast to Caucasians, in whom basal cell carcinoma is most frequent [6]. From India, a 41 year old albino presented with multiple lesions including the one behind the right ear [7]. In the case of a Blantyre woman aged 27 years, the carcinoma was “a left-sided pre-auricular ulcerating mass” [8].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the ear may oddly be selected for cancerous attack in the albino. This is mostly due to the squamous cell variety, the basal cell form being rare. In this context, the present case is decidedly unique. Thus, the squamous celled lesion appeared earlier and was succeeded on the other side by a basal celled lesion.

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Corresponding author: Wilson IB Onuigbo, Department of Pathology, Orthopaedic Hospital, Enugu, Nigeria, E-mail: wilson.onuigbo@gmail.com

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