CARCINOMA CUNICULATUM OF THE ORAL CAVITY: A HISTOLOGICAL AND CLINICAL DILEMMA

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INTRODUCTION

Carcinoma cuniculatum is a very rare and unusual cancer. It was first described occurring in the lower extremities and on few occasions is found in the oral cavity. Grossly they are typically described as mucosal exophytic lesions that are indolent and slow growing in nature and locally aggressive. Histologically it has been described as demonstrating features consistent with both squamous cell carcinoma and verrucous carcinoma. CC predominantly affects older men but there are now definitive statements about etiology and pathology and only few data about recurrence rate or metastatic behavior exist. We present a case of carcinoma cuniculatum of the oral cavity and describe management options once this pathology is recognized.

CLINICAL HISTORY

The patient is a 73 year old male who presented initially with a painful lesion involving the lateral right portion of his tongue in 2004. He was finally referred to the head and neck surgery service and was diagnosed with squamous cell cancer. He underwent transoral robotic partial glossectomy and an ipsilateral modified radical neck dissection. The final pathology was carcinoma cuniculatum with all neck nodes negative for cancer.

CONCLUSIONS

Carcinoma cuniculatum can present in an indolent manner and biopsies can usually give a false diagnosis of benign lesion or pseudoepithelial hyperplasia. Both clinical and histological features need to be considered in the accurate diagnosis of this cancer.

REFERENCES


Figure 1: H&E stain demonstrating papillary projections, keratinization, and well stratified epithelium

Figure 2: H&E stain demonstrating papillary projection, keratinization, and minimal mitotic atypia