CASE REPORT

Tonsillar metastases of melanoma in an older person

GRAZIELA DE OLIVEIRA SEMENZATI, LUIS EDUARDO DA SILVA MÓZ, SILKE ANNA THEREZA WEBER, MAIRA GARCIA MARTINS, REGINA HELENA GARCIA MARTINS

Ophthalmology, Otorhinolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery, Faculdade de Medicina de Botucatu, Botucatu Medical School, São Paulo State University, Distrito de Rubião Junior, s/n, Botucatu, São Paulo 18618-970, Brazil

Address correspondence to: R. H. G. Martins. Tel: (+55) 14 38116256 ; Fax: (+55) 14 38116256. Email: rmartins@fmb.unesp.br

Abstract

We presented a rare case of metastasis of melanoma in palatine tonsils alerting healthcare professionals to this diagnose in black oral lesions.

Keywords: neoplasm metastasis, melanoma, tonsil, older people

Introduction

Melanoma is a skin cancer originated from cutaneous melanocytes. It is common among Caucasians, especially those continuously exposed to sunlight [1, 2]. There are four types of malignant melanoma: superficial spreading (70%), nodular (15–30%), lentigo (4–10%) and acral lentiginous (2–8%). The acral melanoma is common in palmar-plantar regions, digits and subungual areas [3] and is prevalent among Asians, Hispanics and Africans. The 5-year survival is 40% [4] and distant metastases are frequent. Dissemination can occur through lymphatic or haematogenic routes [3, 4].

Case report

Female patient, 89 years old, arrived in an Emergence Center with fever (38°C), throat pain and dysphagia during the previous 7 days. The otorhinolaryngologic evaluation revealed both tonsils covered with fibrinous exudate and a dark lesion in the upper poles (Figure 1). Clindamycin was prescribed for 7 days when the patient became asymptomatic, but the black lesions did not disappear. Biopsy of the lesion diagnosed metastasis of melanoma (confirmed by immunohistochemical techniques for Masson, Vimentin and S-100). When further questioned, the patient reported previous amputation of the distal phalanx of the right hand (18 months before) and histopathological analyses revealed acral lentiginous melanoma, surgical margins free of tumour and negative lymphatic invasion. Brain CT showed multiple metastases in the CNS.

Discussion

Distant metastases of melanoma are frequent but rare in the oropharynx. Kanetaka et al. [5] reported 13 cases of head and neck melanomas with predominance for the age of 60.8 years and prevalence for paranasal and nasal cavity. Marcus et al. [6], in an epidemiological study identified 452 cases of...
head and neck melanoma, predominant in women (52.4%),
white race (84%) and age over 70 years (56.4%). The most
prevalent sites were nasal cavity (52.4%) and paranasal
sinuses (19.7%). The lesion was rare in the oral cavity
(17.3%) and in the oropharynx (2.9%). Tonsilar metastases
of melanomas are rare, <30 cases are reported, and they fre-
quently are late, 6 years after the removal of the primary
tumour [7, 8]. Symptoms usually are not early and the diag-
nosis can be delayed, similarly to the presented case.

Conclusions
Melanoma metastases in the tonsil are rare and should be
suspected when dark lesions are present in that site.

Key points
• tonsilar metastatic melanoma.
• Diagnose of metastatic melanoma.

Conflicts of interest
None declared.

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