



Case Report

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Cancer of the Ear in Albinism



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Abstract

Albinism is characterized by impaired melanin biosynthesis which predisposes to carcinoma. The head is taken as the commonest site of its occurrence. Therefore, the question arises as to the ear that borders it. The answer was obtained by studying this organ among the sun beaten Ibo albinos, who are domiciled in South Eastern Nigeria. Surprisingly, contrary to the pessimistic view that albinos seldom live beyond 30 years, two Ibo elements achieved 70 years. This is open to research.

Keywords: Skin; Ear; Albinism; Cancer; Types; Age; Ibos; Nigeria

Abbreviations: Squ: Squamous Cell Carcinoma; Bas: Basoquamous Carcinoma; Und: Undifferentiated carcinoma; Ade: Adenocystic Carcinoma

Introduction

It was well stated by a South African group that albinism is characterized by impaired melanoma biosynthesis, which is associated with sunlight induced skin cancer [1]. An important aspect is the common involvement of the head and neck as reported from both Nigeria [2] and Tanzania [3]. This leads to the interesting question as to the involvement of the nearby ears. This is answered here by examining the incidence of it among the Ibo ethnic group which is domiciled in the South Eastern Nigeria [4].

Investigation

A Birmingham (UK) group hypothesized on the importance of the establishment of a histopathology data pool with respect to epidemiological analysis [5]. It so happened that I became the pioneer pathologist in such a Regional Pathology Laboratory; it was established at Enugu, erstwhile capital city of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. Moreover, I took care to retain copies of all the reports. They are analyzed here in tabular form in respect of cases involving the ears of albinos.

Results

Table 1: Epidemiological data on albino ear cancer.

No	Initials	Age	Sex	Side	Doctor	*Diagnosis
1	IM	25	M	R	Nwozo	Squ
2	OO	30	M	R	Echezona	Squ
3	OC	30	M	R	Echezona	Squ
4	OS	54	M	R	Nwozo	Squ
5	NP	17	F	L	Uchendu	Squ
6	IK	38	F	R	Echezona	Ade
7	OC	40	M	L	Okeke	Und
8	AC	16	F	R	Echezona	Squ
9	AB	47	M	R	Achebe	Squ
10	EO	32	M	R	Nwozo	Bas
11	OM	60	M	L	Ojukwu	Ade
12	OA	70	M	R	Nnabuko	Und
13	EE	60	M	R	Nnabuko	Bas
14	EL	23	F	L	Uchendu	Squ

15	OE	70	F	R	Ogbonnaya	Squ
16	CB	20	F	R	Onah	Und
16	UO	26	F	L	Uchendu	Squ
18	EO	40	M	L	Uchendu	Bas

The points of interest are the initials of the names; these are followed by the age, sex, side involved, name of doctor, and the microscopical diagnosis, the list being abbreviated (Table 1).

Discussion

A single report from Oman concerned “a case of squamous cell carcinoma of external auditory canal” in an albino [6]. The ear was also mentioned in India [7], in Blantyre [8] and in New York [9]. From Tanzania [3], 75% of the cases were squamous celled. Incidentally, the proportions varied in different Nigerian cohorts, including being “equal” [10], or “low” [11]. In the present study, squamous celled growths and the basal celled growths were in the ratio of 10:3. Moreover, what is not usually mentioned is the adenocystic carcinoma; it occurred twice. Elsewhere, it had already been discussed regarding the face [10]. Furthermore, it has also been discussed at some length as a “molecular variant of albino skin cancer” [12].

The ratio of squamous cell carcinoma to basal cell carcinoma was the close 1.2:1 [13]. In the collected English literature reported from Japan [14], the ratio was more at 3:1. In this community, the ratio was about the same. Concerning age, there is the pessimistic view that albinos “seldom lived more than 30 years” [2]. In Tanzania [3], the median age was 30 years. Hence, the existence of two Ibos aged 70 years is worthy of some research. Sex is worth considering. The male to female ratio was 1.5:1 in Tanzania [3] and 1:1 in another report [13]. The Nigerian ratio was 13 males to 6 females [10]. Here, it is 11 males to 7 females. In considering the doctors, there is a good number of them. The list is led by Dr Uchendu. None of them is a foreigner.

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