



MELANOMA AND MELANOCYTIC NAEVI

POTENTIAL PITFALLS IN CUTANEOUS MALIGNANT MELANOMA DIAGNOSIS: A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS IN THE DERMATOLOGY DEPARTMENT OF A TERTIARY HOSPITAL

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Introduction: Cutaneous malignant melanoma (MM) is responsible for most of skin cancer-related deaths, with primary tumor thickness being determinant for prognosis. Although early detection is key to improve survival, studies have revealed that MM diagnosis is often delayed for multifactorial reasons.

Objective: To analyze the cases of MM diagnosed in our Dermatology Department in recent years, with particular focus on the circumstances and characteristics at diagnosis.

Materials and Methods: We conducted a retrospective study of the cases of histologically proven cutaneous MM diagnosed in our Dermatology Department from January 2014 to June 2018. Demographic, clinical and histopathological data were collected from patient files. Statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 23.0.

Results: We identified 304 MMs in 287 patients, aged 13–91 years (mean 67 years). Most MMs were thin (including 141 cases of in situ MM, and 89 T1a tumors) and required wide local excision, but thicker tumors (T1b to T4b), lymph node and metastatic involvement at time of diagnosis were also found. The culprit lesion was identified as the main Dermatology consultation motive (CM) in 164 (54%) of the cases; the CM was significantly associated with patients' gender and age, tumor subtype and T stage ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions: In our study, almost one-quarter of MMs were diagnosed at stage IB or higher, and only in approximately half of the cases did the malignant lesion correspond to the main CM. These findings highlight the need to increase population awareness of the importance of skin self-examination to reduce delay in seeking medical attention. In a public health system like ours, where non-dermatologist physicians play a gatekeeper role in triaging patients for Dermatology visits and/or Teledermatology, improving training of healthcare professionals in early recognition and referral of potentially malignant skin lesions is also of



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