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TROPICAL DERMATOLOGY

ALBINO AFRICANS AND SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA

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Background: Oculocutaneous albinism is an autosomal recessive disorder of melanocyte differentiation from the pathway of defects in the pathway of melanin biosynthesis, a risk factor for the development of skin tumors and is believed to be a leading cause of death in African albinos. The risk of developing skin cancer is a thousand times greater than the non-albino black population. The most common cancer is spinocellular carcinoma.

Observation: We report our experience in the hospital "Croix" of the Camillian friars in Zinviè, in Benin. The average age of onset is 16 years and at the time of the visit the average size of the tumor is 7 centimeters. The clinical forms are consequently represented by nodular, ulcerative and vegetative and destructing forms. Only in the field of cancerization, always very extensive, small initial papulose forms can be noted. The head and neck are the most affected sites, with a frequent over-bacterial infection. Surgery has been the most common mode of treatment so far. A surgery that must be radical with ample resection margins and suitable "if possible" reconstructive procedures. We observed a late presentation at the medical examination due to lack of structures, to the distance from them, to financial factors. A particular fact is that the albino is not aware of the link between his/her pathology and the exposure to the sunlight.

Key message: As a matter of fact, albinism in Africa has lived seasons absorbed in magic and myth with attitudes coming from rituals sometimes even macabre. It is necessary to intervene and to explain that the tumors are preventable, to establish very precocious protection measures of the skin with clothes and sun protection agents, to support indoor working activities.



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