

GLOBAL SKIN HEALTH

IDENTIFYING AND CHARACTERIZING BASAL CELL CARCINOMAS IN THE ALBINO POPULATION OF TANZANIA

Margit Juhasz⁽¹⁾ - Melissa Levin⁽²⁾ - Andrew Sharp⁽³⁾

University Of California, Irvine, Dermatology, Irvine, United States⁽¹⁾ - New York University, The Ronald O. Perelman Department Of Dermatology, New York, United States⁽²⁾ -University Hospitals Of Leicester, Dermatology, Leicester, United Kingdom⁽³⁾

Introduction: Lack of melanin in persons with albinism (PWA) creates a high risk of nonmelanoma skin cancer (NMSC). Classically, PWA were thought to develop squamous cell (SCC) more frequently than basal cell (BCC) carcinoma. Recent evidence suggests that BCC in PWA are more common than initially hypothesized. Given cultural factors and resource limitations in Eastern Africa, PWA lack access to medical care and present with advanced disease, requiring extensive intervention for invasive or metastatic disease.

Objectives: To characterize the presentation of BCC in PWA and raise awareness of BCC underdiagnosis in PWA.

Materials and Methods: From 2017 to 2019, 54 PWA seeking care at a rural Tanzanian clinic were identified with lesions suspicious for NMSC. Demographic and clinical presentation data were recorded including duration of disease and gross appearance. Histologic analysis of each sample was completed.

Results: The majority of PWA were female (53.7%), with a mean age of 34.6 ± 14.9 years and a mean 0.70 ± 0.73 year duration of disease. Physician-reported clinical description of lesions included ulceration (46.7%), erythema (30%), scale (16.7%), pearly appearance (13.3%) and hyperkeratosis (10%). Lesions were most commonly located on the face (40.7%), trunk (24.1%) and neck (11.1%). Histologic analysis demonstrated 30.2% of lesions were BCC, 26.4% were SCC and 17% were Bowen's disease (SCC ¬in situ), suggesting BCC are more prevalent than invasive SCC in this population. Further analysis of BCC histology showed that micronodular subtype was the most common (37.5%), followed by mixed/basosquamous (12.5%).

Conclusions: Although previous reports of NMSC in PWA indicate invasive SCC is more common than BCC, our data reveal that BCC occurs at a higher rate than SCC in our population of PWA. These findings suggest BCC in PWA is underdiagnosed. It is important to recognize BCC early in PWA to avoid large disease burden and high rates of











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