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Conjunctival Melanoma: Case Report

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Abstract **Case Report**

Conjunctival melanoma is a rare malignant tumor with a recurrent character and metastatic potential. It is characterized in anatomopathology by a tumoral proliferation of atypical melanocytes. It can develop on a pre-existing lesion or appear on a healthy conjunctiva called "de novo" melanoma. The clinical aspect of melanoma is variable. It often appears as a pigmented lesion in relief, more or less nodular and vascularized, but it can also be achromatic. It can involve any portion of the conjunctiva and extend to the surface of the cornea. The involvement can be plurifocal.

Keywords: Conjunctival melanoma, pigmented lesion, enucleation.

INTRODUCTION

Malignant melanoma of the conjunctiva is a rare malignant tumor. The clinical aspect is very variable, and the treatment aims at removing the tumor, avoiding local recurrence but especially metastatic dissemination. We report the case of a patient managed for a malignant melanoma of the conjunctiva.

CLINICAL CASE

A 61-year-old woman was referred to the ophthalmologic emergency room for a blackish conjunctival swelling of the right eye. The clinical examination found a 24 mm diffuse pigmented conjunctival lesion of the temporal conjunctiva, the rest of the ophthalmological examination was inaccessible (Figure 1).

The general clinical examination was normal. The orbital scan did not find any orbital invasion (Figure 2). An extension workup with a chest X-ray and an abdominal ultrasound for liver metastases was negative.

The patient underwent a biopsy suggestive of conjunctival melanoma and was then hospitalized for eventual enucleation. The anatomopathological result came back in favor of a melanoma with scleral extension.

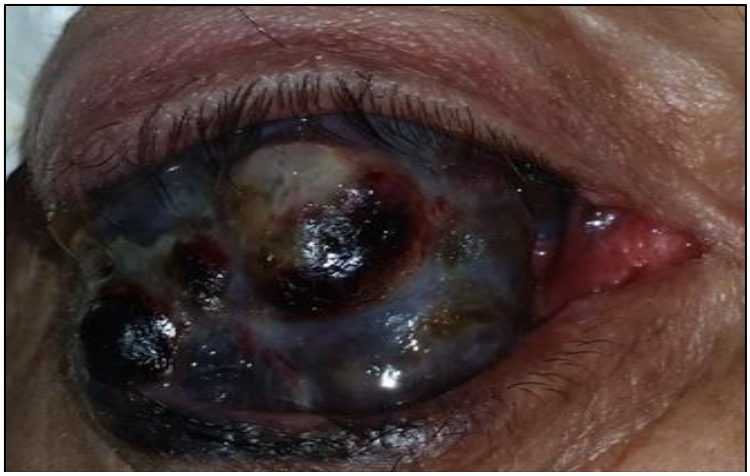

Figure 1: Extensive conjunctival melanoma with involvement of the entire upper palpebral conjunctiva

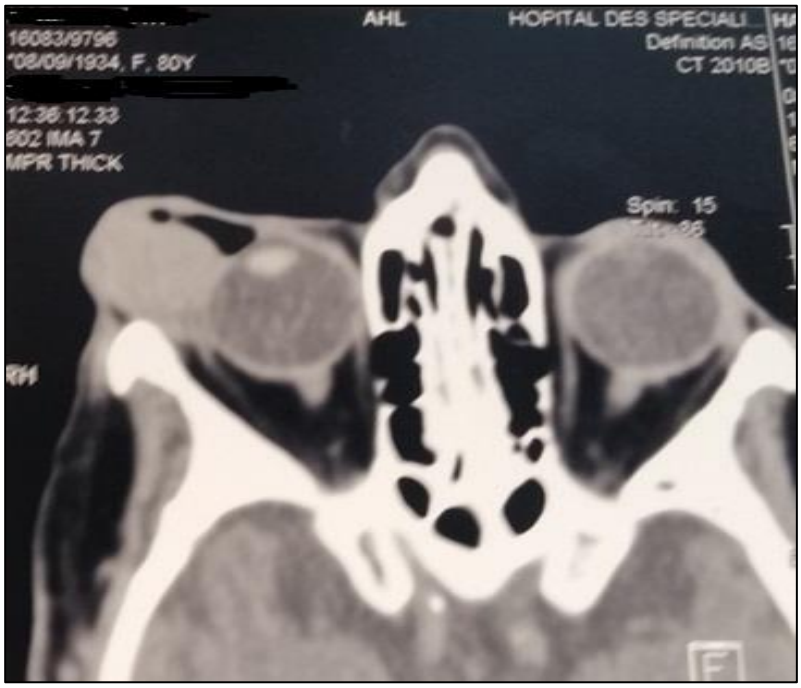

Figure 2: The orbital scanner did not find any orbital invasion

DISCUSSION

Malignant conjunctival melanoma represents 2% of ocular malignancies [1]. The clinical appearance of conjunctival melanoma is highly variable. In 70% of cases, it presents as a raised pigmented lesion. But melanoma can also be achromatic [2]. All areas of the conjunctiva can be affected: bulbar, palpebral, caruncle, cul de sac, semi-lunar fold, but the most frequent location is limbal.

Treatment is primarily surgical, with excision of the lesion as completely as possible. An exenteration is sometimes necessary (13%) in case of very extensive, plurifocal or multi-recurrent involvement [3]. The high rate of recurrence justifies the association of complementary treatments such as cryotherapy or external radiotherapy.

Topical mitomycin C treatments have been used in primary acquired pre-cancerous melanosis [4]. Surveillance is clinical, supplemented by imaging if there is any doubt about locoregional extension. The risk of metastasis is estimated at 26% at 10 years [2]. Most often, pretragal, submaxillary and cervical adenopathies are invaded and should be systematically palpated during the clinical examination [5].

CONCLUSION

Malignant melanoma of the conjunctiva remains a serious tumor with difficult treatment. As with all melanomas, the chances of recovery are high if diagnosed early.

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