Sebaceous Gland Carcinoma

General information

Sebaceous gland carcinoma is a malignant neoplasia stemming from the sebaceous gland, an oil-producing gland associated with hair follicles in mammalian skin. They appear clinically as relatively large, red or pinkish, firm nodules. These nodules are typically found on the head or neck and are often accompanied by hair loss at the site, ulceration and inflammation. If ulcerations are left untreated, secondary bacterial infections may also develop. This type of cancer tends to be locally aggressive and metastasis is rare. If metastasis does occur, it is usually by accessing the local lymphatics system and using that to gain access to the regional lymph node.

Analogous lesions can occur in the meibomian gland, a modified sebaceous gland found in the eyelid. These neoplasias are termed meibomian gland carcinomas but they exhibit a similar pathology to sebaceous gland carcinoma. They are relatively rare in domestic animals. Because this type of cancer appears physically similar to nodular sebaceous hyperplasia, sebaceous gland adenoma and sebaceous gland epithelioma, a definitive diagnosis is obtained via histopathology by a veterinary pathologist.
Risk Factors

This type of cancer is rare in dogs and cats. Dogs ages 9-12 years old are more likely to develop a sebaceous gland carcinoma, particularly Cocker Spaniels, Samoyeds, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Scottish Terriers and Siberian Huskies. Persians are the most likely to be affected of the feline breeds, although both the benign and malignant forms of sebaceous gland tumors are rare in cats. Male dogs and female cats may be predisposed to this particular type of cancer.

Treatment

The veterinarian should submit an appropriate sample of the nodule for histopathology to confirm the presence of a sebaceous gland carcinoma. Once a diagnosis has been established, surgical excision is the treatment of choice. However, complete excision is difficult because this tumor tends to invade the surrounding tissue. Subsequent radiotherapy is often required to prevent recurrence.

Prognosis

The prognosis is variable due to the high likelihood of recurrence. The prognosis is usually better if the sebaceous carcinoma caught early. However, animals that develop one benign or malignant sebaceous tumor are much more likely to develop another one over time.
Comparative Analysis

Although sebaceous gland carcinomas can occur in all domestic species, the majority of them are seen in dogs. Of these, the meibomian gland carcinomas are extremely rare in domestic animals but are one of the most common sebaceous gland carcinomas seen in people.

Sebaceous gland tumors, including sebaceous gland carcinomas are relatively rare in people. Those with Muir-Torre syndrome are more likely to develop this type of cancer.

If diagnosed with sebaceous carcinoma, the most common treatment is surgery.
References


