Sebaceous Gland Epithelioma

General Information

A sebaceous gland epithelioma is a type of neoplastic growth that affects the sebaceous glands found in mammalian skin. They are considered low grade malignancies that appear as yellow to pink colored, mushroom shaped, masses on the head, ears, back and legs. These tumors are commonly hairless, ulcerated, itchy or inflamed due to secondary bacterial infections. Cysts may be present within the mass. They are similar to sebaceous gland adenomas in physical appearance and thus may sometimes be classified as a variation of these sebaceous gland tumors.

Sebaceous gland epitheliomas must also be differentiated from sebaceous gland carcinomas, as they possess similar behaviors on a cellular level. Some sebaceous gland epitheliomas have been reported to display the invasiveness and metastatic capabilities of a higher grade malignancy. They can be locally aggressive and invade the surrounding supportive tissue. They may also metastasize to the local or regional lymphatic system, though this is extremely rare.

An analogous neoplasm can form in the modified sebaceous gland of the eyelid called the meibomian gland. These meibomian epitheliomas may be heavily pigmented due to the presence of melanocytes. Though benign, they may cause eye irritation and or
permanent damage to the eye if allowed to grow and often recur because complete excision in this location is difficult.

**Risk Factors**

This type of neoplasm is much more common in older dogs than in cats. Cocker Spaniels in particular are prone to developing them, but the following breeds are also more commonly affected: Siberian Huskies, Miniature poodles, Coonhounds, Samoyeds, Scottish Terriers, and Shih Tzu's. Sebaceous epitheliomas are relatively rare in cats.

**Treatment**

Complete surgical excision is recommended. However, the epithelioma may recur two or three times following the first surgery. Animals that develop this or other related types of sebaceous gland tumors are more likely to develop another sebaceous gland tumor in a different location.

**Prognosis**

A sebaceous gland epithelioma is considered a low grade malignancy. This means that its behavior is too aggressive to be classified as a benign tumor, but it is unlikely to worsen or spread. Prognosis following surgical excision is good due to the low level of
malignancy. However, recurrence is more likely than in the case of sebaceous adenomas or nodular sebaceous hyperplasia.

**Comparative Aspects**

Sebaceous gland tumors, including sebaceous gland epitheliomas are seen in all domestic animals but are much more common in older dogs. This neoplasm is part of the continuum of sebaceous neoplasia termed a sebaceoma in human medicine. It presents most often in women over the age of 60. They appear mostly on the face and scalp. People with Muir-Torre syndrome are more likely to develop this type of neoplasia. Patients diagnosed with sebaceous epithelioma are at a higher risk for developing other internal malignancies and should be screened appropriately.
References


