



PRIMARY SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA OF THE BREAST- THE FIRST REPORTED RARE BREAST CANCER FROM THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 12th August, 2017

Received in revised form 15th

September, 2017

Accepted 8th October, 2017

Published online 28th November, 2017

Key words:

Primary squamous cell carcinoma of the breast, breast cyst, breast abscess

ABSTRACT

Primary squamous cell carcinoma of the breast is a rare phenomenon. Similarly, the finding of squamous cell carcinoma entirely inside the breast without involvement of skin is very rare. We present the case of a 75 year old female with a right breast lump and confirmed as a pure squamous cell carcinoma of the breast by needle core biopsy. Wide local excision of the lump was performed. The final histopathological examination revealed a primary squamous cell carcinoma of the breast. A literature review was performed. To our knowledge this is first reported case of primary squamous cell carcinoma from the Caribbean countries.

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INTRODUCTION

Squamous cell carcinoma is a well-known malignancy of the skin and other organs surrounded with squamous cells such as the esophagus and the anus. However, pure primary squamous cell carcinoma of the breast is very rare. It represents less than 0.1 % of all breast carcinomas [1]. It is important to discriminate this entity from malignancies of the skin of the breast or metastasis of a squamous cell carcinoma some where else in the body. Its clinical and radiologic appearances are not specific to discriminate malignant versus benign lesions or to characterize the histotype. The correct management of this disease is debated.

The prognosis of this type of breast cancer is still a subject of controversy; some reports suggest that it is aggressive, with an outcome comparable to poorly differentiated ductal carcinoma of the breast [2-5].

An extensive review of the literature reveals about fifty reports and two important series of pure squamous cell carcinoma of breast strictly following the Macia *et al.* diagnostic criteria [6]: thirty-three patients by M.D. Anderson Cancer Center and eleven patients reported by a Spanish group [7, 8]. However there is no reported case in English literature from the Caribbean countries. We report a case of primary squamous cell carcinoma of the breast in a 75 year old female presented as a breast cyst. Management of option this rare cancer is explored and literature review was performed.

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Case report

A 75 years old female presented with a lump to her right breast for two months. She felt the lump during her routine self-breast examination. The patient denied of any associated symptoms or signs including, nipple discharge or skin changes. Of note the patient used OCPs for twenty years, had her menses from 12 to 56 years and raised two fully breast fed children. No family history of breast disease was noted and she never smoked or consumed alcohol. On examination, the breasts were symmetric but a 3cm x 3 cm firm irregular mass was noted in the UOQ (10 O'clock position) of right breast. No enlarged axillary nodes, skin or nipple changes were noted. Ultrasound evaluation revealed two lesions, a 10.4 mm x 7.9 mm simple cystic collection at 2 o'clock position and an 11.8 mm x 8 mm oval cystic mass at 10 o'clock position. No adverse axillary nodes were seen. Further mammographic examination showed a 30.7 mm x 20.3 mm x 21 mm lesion in Right UOQ. Reported as a likely cyst (BIRADS 3), the margins were fairly defined with no significant 3D speculations or clusters of micro calcifications.

Needle core biopsy was done and it revealed small groups of benign cells with no other evidence of malignancy. Patient was offered a wide local excision and sentinel lymph node biopsy, which was negative. The final histo-pathologic examination revealed a cyst lined by Squamous epithelium with solid wall components in which there was a 17 mm Metaplastic Squamous Cell Carcinoma. There were no ductal hyperplasia or carcinoma in situ (AJCC; pT1c pNx). The case was discussed at MDT and no further treatment was offered.

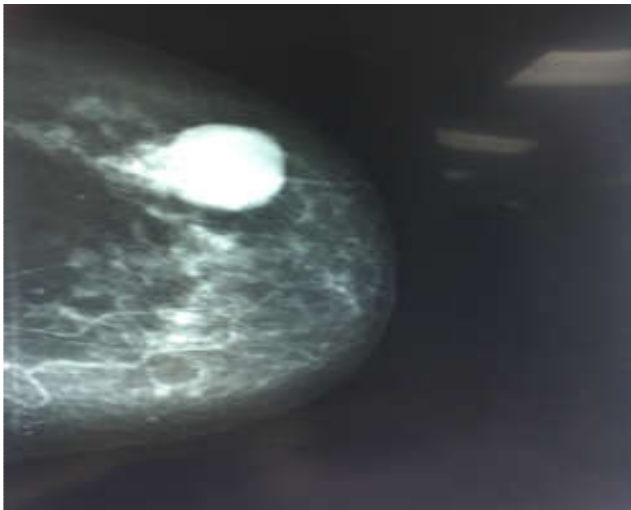


Fig 1 Mammogram showing 30.7 mm x 20.3 mm x 21 mm lesion in Right UOQ, fairly well defined margins with no 3D speculated mass or clusters micro calcifications.

The patient was followed up in the breast clinic and at 2 years follow up the patient has not developed any local or distal metastasis.

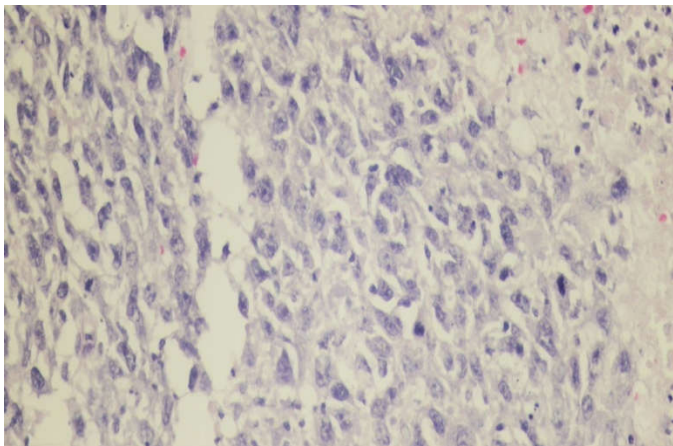


Fig 2 Histo-micrographs showing a cyst lined by Squamous epithelium with solid wall components in which there was a 17mm metaplastic Squamous Cell Carcinoma. There were no ductal hyperplasia or carcinoma in situ (AJCC; pT1c pNx)

DISCUSSION

Squamous cell breast cancer is one of the rare subtypes with incidence under 1% of Breast Cancer cases worldwide [1]. As such data on the subject is limited and most were case reports and small case series. The California Cancer Registry (Grabowski) was among the largest with 177cases over 18 years²[9]. Still, it is too rare at present for randomised studies on optimum management strategies.

Described by Troellin 1908, it arises directly from the epithelium of the mammary ducts, and an alternate theory is that the tumor arises from foci of squamous metaplasia within a preexisting adenocarcinoma of the breast. The latter explains why some cases are receptor positive [10]. According to Rosen *et al*, acceptable diagnostic criteria for pure SCC of the breast include an absence of an associated primary SCC in a second site or absence of skin involvement as well as > 90% of areas with SCC at histologic examination [1].

Similarly Macia *et al*, defined pure squamous cell carcinoma as a tumor with following characteristics:(a) The tumor origin must be independent from the overlying skin and nipple (b)

Absence of other neoplastic elements such as ductal or mesenchymal in the tumor and (c) Absence of an associated primary squamous cell carcinoma in a second site [6].

The mean age at presentation is 54years although it can range between 20 -90 years [11-16].Our case was consistent with this finding. Only one reported male case has been documented to date [17].

Invasive Ductal Carcinoma on the other hand represents 75% of cases, of which 95% occur at younger ages (> 40 years) with a median age at diagnosis of 61yrs [18,19]. Cardoso *et al*⁷ suggested BSCCs are generally large (usually >4 cm) at presentation and cystic in more than 50% of cases [20].But Zhang *et al* in his series of 30 cases noted a large proportion BSCC was diagnosed at early stage disease[17]. However, in the literature there are examples of less typical presentations, for example starting as an abscess [21-23].Our case was considered early stage from the final AJCC classification.

Lymph node involvement was found to be a significant prognostic factor in both overall survival and progression free Survival [23]. In published series, regional lymph node metastases were present in 6- 50% of patients at diagnosis[3]. Menes *et al* found a rate of 22% versus the estimated 40-60% typically seen in IDC [4]. No lymph node disease was found in our case.

Histologically they are considered high grade with less hormone receptor positivity and High frequency of EGFR positivity [25]. The latter may be exploited in the development of future treatments for this disease. Hormone and growth factor testing was not available for our case.

In terms of management most cases in the literature were treated using standard protocols. Surgery was the primary treatment for most patients, as was in this case. Much of the cases reported had MRM as they presented often in a relatively advanced state and exhibited poor responses to neoadjuvant therapy in other cases[17]. BCS was undertaken in some cases and no significant differences were observed between the two approaches. Lumpectomy was reported in a small group of elderly females who also had refused other approaches as with our case. Axillary sampling is recommended in all cases because of a relative uncertainty of LN spread [3]. In the adjuvant setting current breast cancer chemotherapy regimens reportedly have limited activity [26] while platinum-based regimens showed some activity in patients with metastases. Additionally, SCC of the breast is often relatively radio resistant as discovered by Hennessy *et al* 2005 where 43% vs 33% had locoregional recurrence with and without radiotherapy [27]. Zhang *et al* also noted a recurrence and or progression of 33% and subsequent survival was a dismal 6 months [17]. Others reported high locoregional recurrence rates even for T1 lesions [28]. The SEER database between 1988 and 2001 found a 64% five-year Overall survival rate which is supported by other studies by Zhang (OS 67% and PFS 57%) [3,5]. The data from most series so far seems to suggest BSCC can be an aggressive malignancy with a poor outcome. Clearly more Clinical trials are needed to determine optimal management strategies.

CONCLUSION

Pure primary squamous cell carcinoma of the breast can develop even from a simple breast cyst. Therefore, it is of paramount important to send all benign breast lumps (whether

simple or complex cyst and solid mass) for histopathological evaluation. Our case highlights a very rare form of breast cancer in the Caribbean region and adds to the relatively small body of knowledge on this subject.

Conflicts of interest:

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Author contribution:

All authors have contributed significantly in designing and organizing to write manuscript, collecting data as well help in critical analyzing the manuscript. All authors have approved the final version of this manuscript

Funding:

No fund was received to publish this article.

Consent:

Patient consent was obtained.

Guarantor:

The corresponding author and the first author will accept the full responsibility for the work.

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How to cite this article:

Islam S *et al* (2017) 'Primary Squamous Cellcarcinoma of Thebreast-The first reported Rare Breast Cancer From The Caribbean Countries', *International Journal of Current Advanced Research*, 06(11), pp. 7457-7460.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijcar.2017.7460.1154>
