

An Unexpected Plot Twist of Soft Tissue Swelling: A Rare Case of Ancient Schwannoma of the Cheek

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ABSTRACT

Schwannoma is an uncommon benign tumor arising from Schwann cells of the peripheral nervous system. Ancient schwannoma is a rare degenerative variant characterized by cystic degeneration, hemorrhage, myxoid stroma, pleomorphism, and nuclear hyperchromatism. We report a 30-year-old woman with a 10-year history of a right cheek swelling. Clinical examination revealed a solitary 4 × 5 cm, soft, mobile and non-tender swelling. Ultrasonography demonstrated a well-defined dumbbell-shaped soft-tissue lesion measuring 6 × 3.5 cm with anechoic cystic areas and internal vascularity, considered likely neoplastic. Fine-needle aspiration cytology showed cellular smears with nests and groups of basaloid cells with scant cytoplasm and round nuclei, without definite granuloma or atypia. The tumor was excised under general anesthesia through a right submandibular skin-crease incision. It was well encapsulated and easily separated from surrounding tissue. Histopathological examination confirmed ancient schwannoma. The patient remained asymptomatic at 5 months of follow-up. Awareness of the degenerative and atypical features of ancient schwannoma may help avoid misdiagnosis and unnecessary treatment.

Keywords: Ancient schwannoma; Schwannoma; Cheek swelling; Soft tissue tumor; Benign nerve sheath tumor

INTRODUCTION

Schwannoma is an uncommon benign tumor that develops from Schwann cells in the peripheral nervous system. Approximately 25–50% of schwannomas occur in the head and neck region. Ancient schwannoma represents a rare variant in which long-standing degenerative changes may produce cystic degeneration, hemorrhage, myxoid stroma, pleomorphism, and nuclear hyperchromatism. These changes can create diagnostic difficulty and may simulate malignancy. [1,2]

The present case describes an ancient schwannoma presenting as a long-standing cheek swelling, with emphasis on its clinical presentation, imaging, cytology, surgical excision, and histopathological diagnosis.

CASE REPORT

A 30-year-old woman presented with a swelling over the right side of the cheek for 10 years. On local examination, there was a solitary swelling measuring 4 × 5 cm over the right cheek. There was no local rise in temperature. The swelling was non-tender, soft, and mobile.

INVESTIGATIONS

Ultrasonography showed a well-defined dumbbell-shaped soft-tissue lesion measuring 6 × 3.5 cm, with anechoic cystic

areas and internal vascularity, reported as likely neoplastic.

Fine-needle aspiration cytology demonstrated cellular smears with nests and groups of basaloid cells with scanty cytoplasm and round nuclei. No definite granuloma or atypia were identified.

MANAGEMENT

The patient underwent an excision of the tumor under general anesthesia. A right submandibular skin-crease incision was

used. Intraoperatively, the lesion was well encapsulated and was not attached to the surrounding tissue; it was therefore easily separated. The specimen was sent for a histopathological examination. The excised lesion measured 4 × 5 cm.

RESULT

Histopathological examination of the excised lesion revealed ancient schwannoma. The patient was asymptomatic for 5 months of follow-up.



Figure 1. Postoperative photograph showing the patient following complete excision of the ancient schwannoma, with satisfactory wound healing and resolution of the preoperative facial swelling.

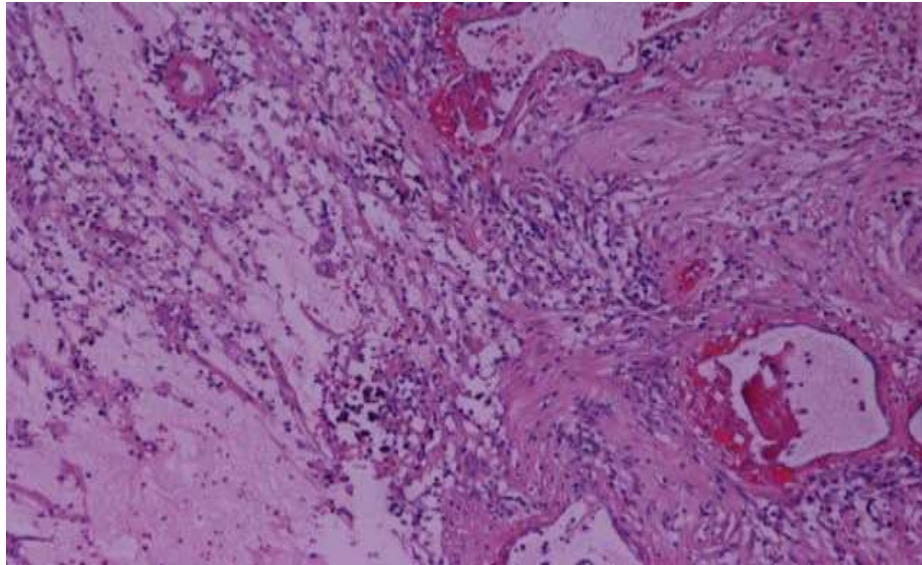


Figure 2. Histopathological examination of ancient schwannoma showing spindle-cell areas with prominent degenerative changes, nuclear atypia, hyalinization and areas of hemorrhage, characteristic of ancient schwannoma (H&E stain).



Figure 3. Intraoperative photograph demonstrating careful dissection and excision of the ancient schwannoma from the surrounding tissues.



Figure 4. Gross specimen of the excised ancient schwannoma, demonstrating a well-circumscribed, encapsulated mass with areas of hemorrhage and degenerative changes.



Figure 6. Preoperative clinical photograph showing prominent swelling over the left side of the face due to the underlying ancient schwannoma.

DISCUSSION

Ancient schwannoma is a rare variant of schwannoma in which degenerative changes develop over time. The reported case had a prolonged 10-year history and a well-encapsulated, mobile lesion, features consistent with a benign, slowly growing process. The imaging appearance included cystic areas and internal vascularity, while FNAC showed cellular basaloid groups without definite atypia. Definitive diagnosis was established after excision by histopathological examination. [1,2]

The importance of recognizing ancient schwannoma lies in its degenerative and cytologic alterations, which may create diagnostic uncertainty. Previous reports have highlighted the possibility of pleomorphism and nuclear hyperchromatism in this benign entity. Recognition of these changes can help prevent misdiagnosis and avoid unnecessary aggressive treatment. [1,2]

CONCLUSION

Ancient schwannoma should be considered in the differential diagnosis of a long-standing, well-defined soft tissue swelling. Histopathological examination remains important for definitive diagnosis because degenerative and atypical changes may mimic more aggressive lesions. Complete excision in this case was followed by an asymptomatic course at 5 months,

supporting the favorable prognosis described for this benign tumor.

Declaration By Authors

Ethical Approval: Not required for this case report; written informed consent was obtained from the patient for publication of clinical details and images.

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