Amelanotic conjunctival melanoma

Rongxuan Lim, Laura De Benito-Llopis

Clinical—A 49-year-old lady presented with a 6-week history of a painless, enlarging lesion on her right eye. There were no visual symptoms nor any previous ocular surgery or trauma. Examination revealed a conjunctival mass measuring 4mm by 4.5mm by 3mm without any scleral attachment (Figures 1 and 2). The differential diagnosis included a foreign body-induced granuloma, pyogenic granuloma, conjunctival intraepithelial neoplasm, and an amelanotic melanoma.

Figure 1. Amelanotic conjunctival melanoma (front view)

Figure 2. Amelanotic conjunctival melanoma (side view)
A wide local excision of the lesion with a conjunctival autograft was performed. Histological analysis revealed an amelanotic melanoma with clear surgical margins. A liver MRI scan did not show any metastasis.

After consultation with a specialist ocular oncology centre, no immediate adjuvant therapy was planned. However, the patient remains under close follow-up to detect any tumour recurrence.

Discussion—Conjunctival melanomas have an annual incidence of 0.2–0.5 per million in Western populations.\(^1\) Although they are typically pigmented, amelanotic and minimally-pigmented conjunctival melanomas comprise up to 19% of cases.\(^2\) Notably, 9–25% of patients develop systemic metastasis and there is a significant mortality of 13–38% at 10 years.\(^2\) As illustrated by this case, amelanotic conjunctival melanomas can mimic benign lesions and should be considered in cases of non-pigmented, rapidly growing conjunctival lesions.

Author information: Rongxuan Lim, Specialist Registrar; Laura De Benito-Llopis, Consultant Ophthalmologist; Department of Ophthalmology, St Thomas’ Hospital, London, United Kingdom

Correspondence: Dr Rongxuan Lim, Specialist Registrar, Department of Ophthalmology, St Thomas’ Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7EH, United Kingdom. Email: rongxuan.lim@oxon.chch.org

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