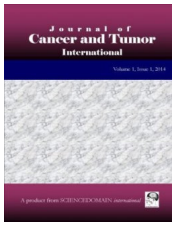

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Collision Tumor at the Gastroesophageal Junction; Coexistence of Basaloid Squamous Cell Carcinoma and Small Cell Neuroendocrine Carcinoma

Mehmet Deniz Bulut[1*], Gülay Bulut[2], Remzi Erten[2], Ayşe Öter Almalı[2] and Necat Almalı[3]

[1]Department of Radiology, School of Medicine, Yüzüncü Yıl University, Van, Turkey.
[2]Department of Pathology, School of Medicine, Yüzüncü Yıl University, Van, Turkey.
[3]Department of General Surgery, School of Medicine, Yüzüncü Yıl University, Van, Turkey.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Authors MDB and GB designed the study, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors MDB, GB, RE, AOA and NA managed the literature search. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Case Report

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ABSTRACT

Basaloid squamous cell carcinoma (BSC) is a poorly differentiated and rare variant of squamous cell carcinoma. It is frequently seen in the upper respiratory and gastrointestinal systems. Neuroendocrine tumors originate from the neuroendocrine system and may be seen at any site of the body. Small cell neuroendocrine carcinoma (NEC) belongs to the poorly differentiated neuroendocrine tumor group, and tumors can be located at various sites, most commonly occurring in the lungs. In light of the current literature on these carcinomas, this case study reports a 61-year-old male in whom these poorly differentiated tumors were found to coexist. To the best of our knowledge, coexistence of BSC and small cell NEC at the gastro-esophageal junction is quite a rare condition and the first case report in the literature. In this case report, coexistence of two poor-differentiated tumors has been discussed under the light of the current literature.

**Corresponding author: Email: drmehmetdenizbulut@gmail.com;*

Keywords: Collision tumor; basaloid squamous cell carcinoma; small cell neuroendocrine carcinoma.

1. INTRODUCTION

Collision tumor refers to the incidental coexistence of two different and independent tumors. This entity is very rare and has an obscure pathophysiology; real collision tumors of the gastro-esophageal junction are quite rare [1]. BSC, first described by Wain et al. in 1986 as a laryngo-pharyngeal tumor and a poorly differentiated and rare variant of typical squamous cell carcinoma [2], comprises 0.3% to 4% of all esophageal carcinomas and is a biologically aggressive and malignant cancer [3]. Neuroendocrine tumors originate from the neuroendocrine system at any site of the body. Tumors developing from these cells have a diverse clinical course and prognosis and are classified into two groups (well or poorly differentiated) according to the World Health Organization's 2000 neuroendocrine tumor classification. Small cell NEC is the most aggressive, poorly differentiated high-grade malignant tumor. Small cell NECs of the esophagus are seen quite rarely and constitute 0.8% to 2.4% of all esophageal carcinomas [4]. First defined in 1952 [5], tumors representing small cell NEC is found in different locations throughout the body, but are most commonly observed in the lungs.

Coexistence of BSC and small cell NEC is quite rare in a case where a tumor is located in gastro-esophageal junction, and to the best of our knowledge, our case is the first in the literature. In this case report, coexistence of two poorly differentiated tumors has been discussed under the light of the current literature.

2. CASE

A 61-year-old male patient was admitted to our clinic due to epigastric pain, weight loss, and dysphagia. An ulcero-vegetant mass lesion that narrowed the lumen beginning from the 38th cm of the esophagus and extending to the cardia of the stomach was detected on endoscopy. Computed tomography of the thorax revealed an irregular wall thickening that began from the distal esophagus and extending to the cardia-major curvature of the stomach (Fig. 1). The patient underwent total gastrectomy and distal esophagectomy due to a tumor located in the gastroesophageal junction. On macroscopic examination, an ulcero-vegetant mass lesion measuring 5 cm at a 1-cm distance to the proximal surgical margin was observed. The lesion was located in the gastro-esophageal junction and cardia of the stomach, and completely surrounded the lumen. Two different neighboring tumor foci were seen on histopathological examination (Fig. 2). In one of the tumor foci, a field, which had a narrow cytoplasm, cells with hyper-chromatic nuclei, demonstrating a solid growing pattern, included focal necrosis fields, was observed (Fig. 3). Another tumor focus, which had a narrow cytoplasm, hyperchromatic nucleus, displaying high mitotic activity and high-grade small cell NEC properties and the nucleoli of which could not be differentiated, was also observed next to the first tumor field (Fig. 4).

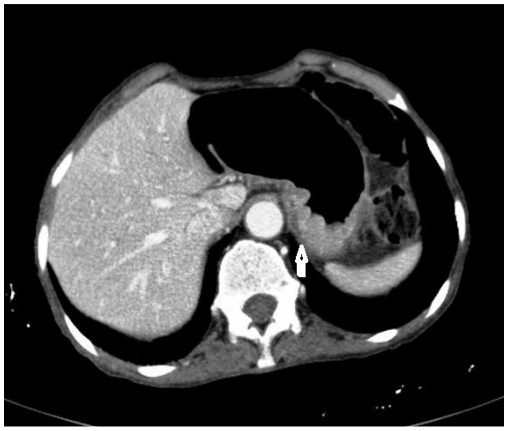

Fig. 1. Irregular wall thickening is observed at the gastro-esophageal junction and cardia of the stomach on axial Computed tomography images (arrow)

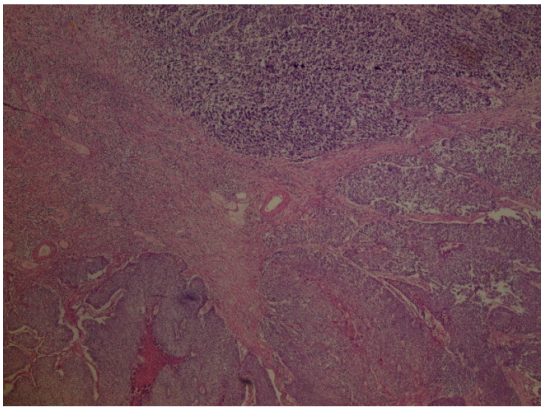

Fig. 2. Coexistence of basaloid squamous cell carcinoma and small cell neuroendocrine carcinoma (H&E x40)

On immunohistochemical examination, positive staining was seen with CK, CK19, and EMA at the BSC focus. Positive staining was observed with CD56; chromogranin A (Fig. 5a, 5b); and CK, CK19, and EMA in neoplastic cells at the small cell NEC focus. The Ki67 proliferation index was 22%; the mitotic index was evaluated to be higher than 25 in 10 high power fields for both BSC and NEC foci. The patient was diagnosed with BSC + high-grade small cell NEC.

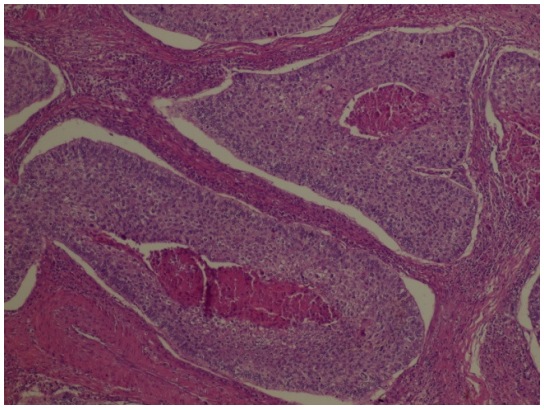

Fig. 3. Basaloid squamous cell carcinoma focus (Comedo necrosis-like pattern) (H&E x100)

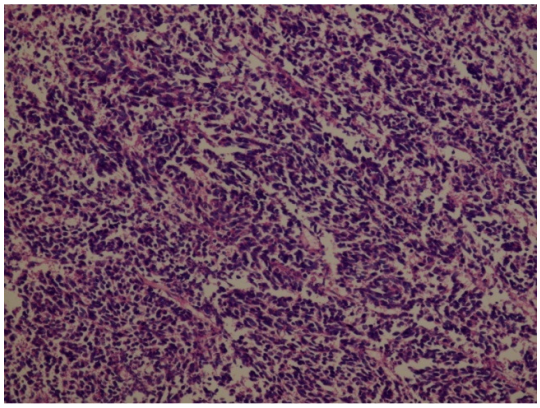

Fig. 4. Small cell neuroendocrine carcinoma focus (H&E x200)

3. DISCUSSION

Collision tumors are rare tumors originating from two different histo-genetic events. These tumors contain two different tumors, which grow very close to each other, although they appear as a single lesion. This entity is a very rare condition together with obscure pathophysiology. Collision tumors should be discriminated from composite tumors, which are differentiated from two cell lines and contain a single neo-plastic clone. Coexistence of adenocarcinoma and lymphoma, adenocarcinoma and small cell carcinoma or adenocarcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma may be given as examples for collision tumors located at the gastro-esophageal junction [1,6-8]. However, co-existence of squamous cell carcinoma and small cell carcinoma has been reported in only one case in the literature [9]. These types of tumors are usually detected during surgery and diagnosed after pathological examination. We did not encounter reports of coexisting BSC and small cell NEC in the literature review.

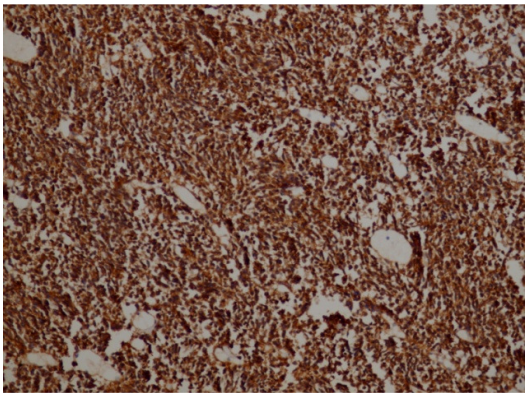

Fig. 5a. Chromogranin A positivity at the small cell neuroendocrine carcinoma focus (Chromogranin x400)

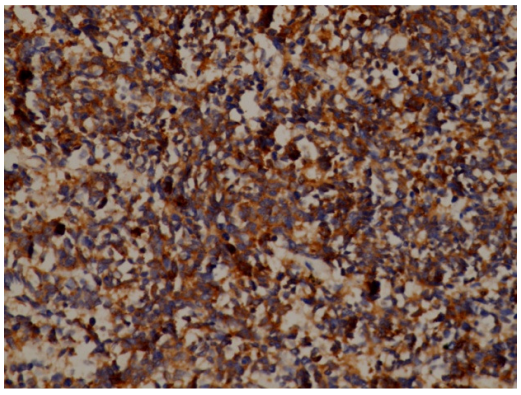

Fig. 5b. CD56 positivity at the small cell neuroendocrine carcinoma focus (CD56x200)

Although it is accepted as a different form of squamous cell carcinoma, basaloid squamous cell carcinoma exhibits a different histopathological and clinical behavior. These

tumors, which are usually at an advanced stage at the time of diagnosis, form large masses that show lymph node metastasis and hematogenic metastasis. Furthermore, BSC is characterized by poor differentiation, high proliferative activity, high biological malignancy, high incidence of distant metastasis, and a high spontaneous apoptosis rate. BSC is a histologically invasive carcinoma which has a narrow cytoplasm, is composed of cells with hyperchromatic nuclei, demonstrates a solid growth pattern, and which contains small cystic fields and focal necrosis fields [10].

Neuroendocrine tumors contain different tumor groups including slowly growing well-differentiated tumors, poorly differentiated high-grade NEC and mixed endocrine-exocrine tumors. Two-thirds of neuroendocrine tumors are observed in the gastrointestinal system, one-fourth in the lung, and the others in the other endocrine organs. Neuroendocrine tumors are characterized by intra-cytoplasmic neurosecretory granules bound to the membrane, which can be detected with electron microscopy [5]. Small cell neuroendocrine carcinomas are most commonly located in the lower third of the esophagus [11], are very invasive and cause distant metastases in the early period of the development of cancer [12]. They are composed of round or oval cells that form solid islands and nests that have a narrow cytoplasm and a small, dark nucleus. Chromogranin A, synaptophysin, CD56, and NSE are usually positive immunohistochemically. Synaptophysin is the most sensitive diagnostic marker [13,14]. In our case study, positive staining was also observed with CD56, chromogranin A, and pancytokeratin at the small-cell NEC focus.

4. CONCLUSION

In this case study two different tumor components were observed as a result of histopathological examination, although there was a single tumor focus. BSC and small cell NEC may be rarely seen among collision tumors; to the best of our knowledge, our case is the first in the literature.

CONSENT

All authors declare that written informed consent was obtained from the patient for publication of this case report and accompanying images.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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