

VITILIGO WITH OESOPHAGEAL CARCINOMA

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Summary

A 45 year old patient with vitiligo and oesophageal carcinoma is described. Lesions of vitiligo became generalised after the development of the neoplasm. The importance of this association is not well understood.

KEY WORDS: Vitiligo; Oesophageal carcinoma.

Introduction

The association of vitiligo with autoimmune disorders like Hashimoto's thyroiditis, pernicious anaemia, Addison's disease and diabetes mellitus has been documented¹⁻⁴. Vitiligo developing in some patients with metastatic malignant melanoma has also been described⁵. However, reports of vitiligo with visceral carcinoma are sparse and a total of about 20 cases seems to have been reported in the literature⁶. We describe a patient with vitiligo and oesophageal carcinoma.

Case Report

A 45 year old housewife noticed a single depigmented patch over her right eyebrow 4 years prior to her hospital visit. A year and a half later, she started having gradually progressive dysphagia. One year following the onset of dysphagia, barium studies and endoscopy revealed a carcinoma of the lower third of the oesophagus which

was histologically shown to be a squamous cell carcinoma. Routine investigations (haemogram, urinalysis and blood sugar) were within normal limits. Antinuclear factor (ANF) and autoantibodies to parietal cell, thyroid cytoplasm and thyroglobulin were negative.

The patient was given radiotherapy—Cobalt 60, through 2 apposition portals upto a total tumour dose of 4500 rads over a period of 3 weeks. Three months later, the white patches had become generalised to involve the entire face, trunk and limbs. Dysphagia improved after irradiation and the patient was doing well when last seen 1 year after radiotherapy.

Discussion

Wright et al⁷ in 1970 reported a case of vitiligo, gastric carcinoma and pernicious anaemia in a 46 year old male. Lassus et al⁸ in 1972, reported 11 patients with vitiligo and malignant disease. Among these, 5 patients had carcinoma of gastrointestinal tract, 2 intracranial tumours, 2 skin tumours, 1 breast and 1 uterine carcinoma. Andreev⁹ in 1975, reported 2 patients with vitiligo and brain tumours. In one of these, vitiligo improved after surgical excision of the neoplasm.

The temporal relationship between the onset of vitiligo and the malignancy

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