Conjunctival Malignant Melanoma in Children

The incidence of conjunctival malignant melanoma is rare and is estimated, according to Taban and Traboulsi in this issue of the Journal of Pediatric Ophthalmology & Strabismus, to be 0.012 to 0.08 case per 100,000 individuals in the Western population. In their review of the world literature, Taban and Traboulsi found only 28 cases of conjunctival malignant melanoma in individuals younger than 15 years. This article coincided with my first case of conjunctival malignant melanoma in a 16-year-old patient in more than 25 years of pediatric ophthalmology practice. The history and clinical presentation of the conjunctival lesion were consistent with a conjunctival nevus. However, children with conjunctival nevi I have examined have tended to be younger than this patient. Following excision of the conjunctival lesion, the pathology report confirmed that it was a malignant melanoma. Taban and Traboulsi appropriately recommend that any rapidly growing, vascularized conjunctival mass that changes color, regardless of the patient’s age, should be excised. Although the odds of conjunctival lesions in children being malignant melanoma are low, early diagnosis and treatment of these lesions will improve prognosis.

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