Epithelial tumors of the lacrimal gland: an update
Francesco P. Bernardini, Martin H. Devoto and J. Oscar Croxatto

Introduction
According to a clinical series from the Wills Eye Hospital, lacrimal gland tumors represent almost 10% of the space-occupying orbital lesions, with epithelial lesions accounting for 20% of the total and inflammatory and lymphatic lesions for the remaining 80%. Among the epithelial lesions, 55% are benign and 45% are malignant [1]. Among benign lesions the most common are pleomorphic adenomas and dacryops, whereas among the malignant lesions adenoid cystic carcinoma is the most common (66%), followed by carcinoma ex pleomorphic adenoma (18%), primary adenocarcinoma (9%) and mucoepidermoid carcinoma (3%) [1].

Clinical features
In this section we will describe the clinical features of benign and malignant lacrimal gland lesions.

Benign lacrimal gland tumors
Benign tumors of the lacrimal fossa include pleomorphic adenoma and dacryops. Pleomorphic adenoma represents the most common benign epithelial lesion of the lacrimal gland (12%) [2]. Patients affected by pleomorphic adenoma usually have a long history of painless proptosis. Unusual clinical presentations with abrupt orbital inflammation or as a painful subcutaneous nodule have also been reported [3-7]. Orbital imaging shows a well defined, round or oval mass in the lacrimal fossa, without bone erosion. Unusual radiological presentations include lacrimal gland masses dominated by low-density areas resembling cysts [4-6]. A complete surgical excision of the pleomorphic adenoma is recommended with an intact capsule, though incisional biopsy should be avoided given the potential risks of recurrences or even of malignant transformation of the lesion. Recently, Currie and Rose [5-8] evaluated the long-term risk of recurrence after excision of pleomorphic adenomas of the lacrimal gland with a minimum follow-up of 5 years and they found no recurrences in patients that had an excision with an intact capsule, in those with a breach of the capsule during an attempt of intact excision and in those that underwent complete excision after previous incomplete excision. They reported a benign recurrence in one patient that underwent previous incisional biopsy.
2 Oculoplastic and orbital surgery

showing that complete excision of pleomorphic adenoma should be considered curative, even though a long follow up is warranted [5**]. Recently, Lai et al. [6**] raised the question ‘is there a role for biopsy in pleomorphic adenoma of the lacrimal gland?’ They reviewed the literature and found that the majority of previous studies against biopsy have included cases with incomplete excision or biopsy alone. On the basis of their results, they suggest that in a minority of patients with pleomorphic adenoma, biopsy may be considered for diagnosis and management. In addition, if surgical resection is required, they recommend complete excision including the biopsy tract to ensure complete removal [6**]. Although normally pleomorphic adenomas occur within the lacrimal gland, its occurrence in an accessory lacrimal gland of Wolfing has recently been reported [7].

Dacryops are a relatively common entity (6%) that usually affects the palpebral lobe of the lacrimal gland where they are visible upon eversion of the upper lid. Occasionally, they may affect the orbital lobe causing proptosis and ‘S’-shaped ptosis and in this case, it may be difficult to differentiate a dacryops from other entities. On imaging, they present as cystic lesions filled with clear fluid. Histopathology shows a cyst lined by lacrimal duct epithelium. Recently, primary squamous carcinoma presumably arising from a lacrimal duct cyst, benign mixed cell tumor combined with a lacrimal cyst and hemangiopericytoma associated with dacryops have been reported, whereas we observed a monoclonal lymphoid infiltrate in combination with dacryops in one case (unpublished data) [8–10]. Complete excision of the orbital dacryops is recommended and recurrences are rare. When dealing with a palpebral lobe dacryops, care should be taken not to damage the orifices of the gland, in order to avoid dry eye complications.

Recently a new entity, defined as benign fibrous histiocytoma, a relatively common mesenchymal tumor that commonly originates from ocular and adnexal tissues, has been reported to occur in the lacrimal gland [11*]. Finally, a primary bilateral cystadenoma of the lacrimal gland was surgically excised by Bajaj [12].

Malignant lacrimal gland tumors

The clinical features of adenoid cystic carcinoma (ACC), the most common malignant lesion of the lacrimal gland, include globe dystopia, proptosis and ‘S’-shaped ptosis. Pain is considered a strong indicator of aggressive behavior, especially if associated with hypoesthesia in the frontotemporal region and it is secondary to invasion of the orbital nerves. The duration of symptoms is relatively shorter in comparison with benign tumors, usually within 6 months time. Radiologically, bone erosion occurs early on and the margins of the lesion may appear irregular; focal calcification within the lesion may occur. Adenoid cystic carcinomas may arise from the accessory lacrimal glands and ectopic lacrimal gland tissue [13*]. In an attempt to find a prognostic correlation with histologic subtype, many studies have been published. Gamel and Font [14] found that the presence of a ‘basaloid’ pattern affects the prognosis negatively. They found a 5-year survival rate of 21% for patients with basaloid pattern compared with 71% for patients with ‘nonbasaloid’. Lee et al. [15] found that a better prognosis was noted if the tumor had a cribriform ‘Swiss cheese’ appearance. In a group of salivary and lacrimal gland ACCs, Hamper et al. [16] found prognostic correlation with a glandular pattern on histology, with the tumor size and the different subtypes based on cytophometry. In contrast with these findings, Friedrich and Bleckmann showed that only the stage of the tumor had an impact on prognosis whereas the localization or the histological subtypes did not show any impact on survival [17]. Strianese et al. [18*] studied the relationship among apoptosis related markers and prognosis in 21 malignant epithelial tumors of the lacrimal gland, including 11 adenoid cystic carcinomas. They found that increased Bcl-2 staining was significantly correlated with a poor survival.

The treatment of lacrimal gland adenoid cystic carcinoma is still controversial and different treatment modalities have been compared to evaluate their impact in long-term survival. According to Bartley and Harris, the question ‘is there a cure yet?’ remains unanswered [19]. A study by Wright et al. compared the outcomes in a group of 38 patients affected by adenoid cystic carcinoma and were treated using three different methods: dacryoadenectomy alone, dacryoadenectomy with radiotherapy, radiotherapy alone and extended cranio-orbital resection. The authors found that, although patients tended to survive longer when treated with surgical resection with radiotherapy than radiotherapy alone, the rate of disease-free survival after treatment of ACC appeared to be unaltered by cranio-orbital resection [20]. Esmaeli et al. [21] reported a series of seven patients with locally advanced ACC that underwent exenteration with superior and lateral orbitectomy followed by radiotherapy of the orbit and the skull base. They achieved a satisfactory local control of the disease, but despite this aggressive approach five patients developed distant metastasis and died [21]. More recently, a significant improvement for the prognosis of lacrimal gland ACC seems to be offered by the use of intra-arterial cytoreductive chemotherapy (IACC) as an adjunct to conventional surgery and radiation therapy, as reported by Tse et al. [22]. They treated a group of nine patients with IACC followed by orbital exenteration and radiotherapy and compared their outcome with a historical cohort of
seven patients treated with conventional therapies. They found a significant reduction of cause-specific death rate and recurrence rate in the study group compared with the control.

Another important chapter includes carcinoma ex pleomorphic adenoma (Ca ex PA), also called carcinoma in pleomorphic adenoma, malignant mixed tumor or pleomorphic carcinoma, which is a relatively common malignant tumor of the lacrimal gland with an incidence of 12% among malignant neoplasms of the lacrimal gland and a similar incidence among the salivary gland malignancies [23]. Typically it occurs in the 6th or 7th decade, one decade later that pleomorphic adenoma. To fit with the diagnosis, both benign and malignant components of the lesion need to be identified, whereas if the benign component does not appear the diagnosis is of pleomorphic carcinoma only. The main criteria for histopathological diagnosis are frank carcinomatous infiltrative areas, marked atypia, numerous atypical mitosis and necrosis [24]. Most commonly the malignant component is represented by a poorly differentiated adenocarcinoma or an undifferentiated carcinoma, but adenoid cystic carcinomas have also been described [25*]. Ca ex PA should be sub-classified into noninvasive, also termed intracapsular or carcinoma in situ, minimally invasive (<1.5 mm from the capsule) and invasive carcinoma (>1.5 mm from the capsule). Noninvasive and minimally invasive carcinomas have an excellent prognosis with complete surgical excision without adjunctive radiotherapy. Our anecdotal experience with an intracapsular Ca ex PA underwent complete surgical excision with an intact capsule and has been followed for over 1 year without adjunctive radiotherapy and is now alive and free of local recurrence. On the contrary, invasive Ca ex PAs are aggressive tumors with a poor prognosis. Another patient with CA ex PA and with invasion of the capsule was treated with local resection and radiotherapy. After 8 months of follow-up a recurrence was diagnosed. The patient was exenterated with additional radiotherapy, but died of extensive metastasis after 1 year. A recent article focused on the role of adjunctive radiotherapy on the local control in a group of 63 patients with invasive Ca ex PA of the parotid gland and found that the 5-year local control rate had significantly improved from 49 to 75% [26**].

Since Katz et al. presented the first case of primary ductal adenocarcinoma of the lacrimal gland and referred this rare tumor to the more common salivary gland tumor classification of the WHO, this has become the standard practice and now ophthalmologists and pathologists are revising the lacrimal gland classification according to the salivary gland tumor classification by WHO (Table 1) [24,27,28].

On the basis of the WHO’s classification of salivary gland tumor, Devoto and Croxatto [29] reported a new entity affecting the lacrimal gland described as primary cystadenocarcinoma. This unique entity in the lacrimal gland follows the clinical course of the more common lesion in the salivary gland with an indolent behavior and no need of adjunctive radiotherapy [29]. The lesion was completely excised with an intact capsule and no

### Table 1 Classification of lacrimal gland tumors

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<th>Epithelial neoplasms</th>
<th>Nonepithelial neoplasms</th>
<th>Tumor-like conditions</th>
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<td>Benign epithelial tumors</td>
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<td>Pleomorphic adenoma</td>
<td>Lymphoma</td>
<td>Lacrimal duct cysts</td>
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<td>Oncocytoma</td>
<td>Plasmacytoma</td>
<td>Ectopic lacrimal gland</td>
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<td>Warthin’s tumor</td>
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<td>Sialoloblastoma</td>
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<td>Benign lymphoepithelial lesion</td>
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<td>Malignant epithelial tumors</td>
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<td>Adenoid cystic carcinoma</td>
<td>Neurofibroma and schwannoma</td>
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<td>Carcinoma ex-pleomorphic adenoma</td>
<td>Lipoma</td>
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<td>Adenocarcinoma (NOS)*</td>
<td>Metastatic or secondary tumors</td>
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<td>Mucoepidermoid carcinoma</td>
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<td>Polymorphous low-grade carcinoma</td>
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<td>Basal cell adenocarcinoma</td>
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<td>Acinic cell carcinoma</td>
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<td>Ductal adenocarcinoma</td>
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<td>Squamous cell carcinoma</td>
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<td>Clear cell carcinoma</td>
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<td>Cystadenocarcinoma</td>
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NOS, not otherwise classified.
*High-grade neoplasms.
Low grade neoplasms.
Adapted from [24].
adjunctive radiotherapy was administered and the patient is alive and well 7 years postoperatively. Anecdotally, we are following another patient affected by primary cystadenocarcinoma of the lacrimal gland that underwent complete surgical excision of the original lesion, but the patient experienced an intraoperative capsule breach with leakage of fluid content and developed a local recurrence 1 year later. The patient underwent surgical excision of the recurrent tumor followed by radiotherapy and is now 3 years postoperatively alive and free of recurrence.

Basal cell adenocarcinoma has been reported to occur in the salivary glands and only recently in the lacrimal gland also; the differential diagnosis include especially the solid basolateral variant of adenoid cystic carcinoma that has a much worse prognosis [30].

Rare tumors of the lacrimal gland include solitary fibrous tumor of the lacrimal gland fossa, a primary extramural plasmacytoma of the lacrimal gland, and sialoblastoma, a rare congenital locally aggressive epithelial tumor [31*].

Conclusion

The management of lacrimal gland tumors has been rapidly evolving in these recent years due to the knowledge that they compare histologically and behave clinically similarly to the more common counterparts affecting the major salivary glands. Primary adenocarcinomas of the lacrimal gland can now be divided into low-grade and high-grade malignancies; the revised classification of lacrimal gland tumors allows a precise diagnosis and appropriate management of rare lacrimal gland lesions, as it has been in the case of primary cystadenocarcinoma or the intracapsular Ca ex PA. Important advances have been made on the treatment of adenoid cystic carcinomas, pleomorphic adenomas and dacryops.

References and recommended reading

Papers of particular interest, published within the annual period of review, have been highlighted as:

• of special interest

• of outstanding interest

Additional references related to this topic can also be found in the Current World Literature section in this issue (pp. 000–000).


This article reminds of possible unusual presentations.


This article is important because it is a single center retrospective review of a large number of pleomorphic adenomas with a long follow-up, and shows that the risk of recurrence after complete excision is minimal.


This study offers a large review of lacrimal and salivary gland pleomorphic adenomas to demonstrate that preoperative biopsy, to confirm the nature of the lesion, can safely be offered to patients, provided that the surgical tract is removed at the time of eventual subsequent complete surgical excision.


12. Describes a new entity in the lacrimal gland.


15. The authors report the largest series of ACC arising from accessory lacrimal glands and the first case was reported to occur in ectopic lacrimal gland.


First case reported of cystic carcinoma arising from pleomorphic adenoma.


The use of postoperative radiotherapy significantly improved the 5-year local control and survival in patients without lymph node metastasis.
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Awareness of this rare entity that occurred in the palpebral lobe of the lacrimal gland will help in avoiding misdiagnosis and also refine treatment-related issues on this rare tumor.
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