Skin cancer above the neck more likely to spread, research shows

(MADRID, 11 October, 2019) New results from a descriptive, 6-month clinical study suggest that malignant melanoma (MM) that develops on the neck has a higher chance of spreading beyond the skin compared with MM that develops below the neck. However, even though significantly more of these study patients had below neck MM tumors at an advanced disease stage, none of them were found to have distant metastases, in which MM spreads to other distant parts of the body.

Furthermore, only one of these below neck MM patients was diagnosed with positive lymph nodes. The study findings were presented today at the 28th EADV Congress in Madrid, Spain.

Forty-five patients with new diagnoses of MM were investigated over a period of 6 months and were divided into two groups of patients, with above neck MM and below neck MM. The aim of the study was to see which types of MM were more likely to metastasize (spread) in terms of location.

Researchers used computer tomography (CT) staging to determine the existence and spread of the cancer. Patients who had stage T2a or more disease were also offered a sentinel lymph node biopsy (SLNB) to further investigate the extent of the disease.

Results revealed that out of the 37 below neck MM patients, none of them had distant metastases and only one had positive nodes (2.7%). Out of the 8 above neck MM patients, two had positive nodes and distant metastases (25%). Therefore, the study showed that above neck MM has a higher chance of spreading beyond the skin in comparison with below neck MM.

The most dangerous skin cancer

Malignant melanoma is the most dangerous type of skin cancer and is becoming progressively more common, especially in younger populations. Once MM has spread deeper into the skin or other parts of the body, it becomes more difficult to treat and can be deadly. In addition, melanomas often have mutations in the BRAF V600 gene. These changes affect the production of the BRAF protein and make cells grow faster.

“A mutation in the gene encoding BRAF has been well demonstrated to occur in association with malignant melanoma, and this has revolutionized further management in patients with advanced disease. In this study, we have reviewed new MM diagnoses to see which ones are more likely to metastasize in terms of location. Understanding more about these locations also may help to determine and manage a patient's survival,” explained Dr Mohammed Al Abadie lead researcher of the study, who presented the results at the EADV conference.
Notes to Editors

A reference to the 28th EADV Congress must be included when communicating any information within this press release.

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Dr Mohammed Al Abadie is from the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, New Cross Hospital Department of Dermatology, United Kingdom

About EADV:
Founded in 1987, EADV is a non-profit organisation whose vision is to be the premier European Dermato-Venereology Society. The Academy counts over 7,000 members from 100 countries, providing a valuable service for every type of dermato-venereologist professional. EADV are dedicated to advancing patient care, education and research by providing a unique platform to bring people together and share ideas.

The EADV Congress takes place every year and attracts over 13,000 attendees. Boasting an exceptional Scientific Programme and educational experience with more than 180 sessions across various tracks, expert speakers will discuss the latest advances and information on trending topics in dermatology.

Find out more via the EADV website: https://www.eadv.org/

References: