

## Melanoma of the Rectum in a Nigerian Woman

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### ABSTRACT

A review of the metastatic patterns of choroid melanoma did not contain a case involving the rectum. Therefore, a case presenting in this site in a 40-year-old Nigerian woman of the Igbo Ethnic Group is worthy of documentation. In this context, the rarity of the lesion was discussed as well as the age incidence.

**Keywords:** Cancer, melanoma, primary, metastasis, female, Nigeria

### INTRODUCTION

There has been some debate on the merit, or on the lack of it, in sending surgical specimens to a distant Reference Pathology Laboratory.<sup>1</sup> This was debated by us not long ago.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, this Nigerian case of rectal melanoma diagnosed in such a Laboratory concerns a woman of the Igbo Ethnic Group.<sup>3</sup> It is deemed to be worthy of documentation.

### CASE REPORT

A 40-year-old woman attended the Healing Cross Hospital, Umuahia, on 18th October, 2001, complaining of prolapsed rectal mass for the duration of 4 months with associated hemorrhages. Following routine examinations, a fungating mass was removed by one of us (AM) and submitted to the senior author (WO) for pathological opinion.

There was one main mass 6 cm across with several much smaller masses. On section, suspicious black areas were noted. On microscopy, there were sheets of polygonal tumor cells showing melanin pigmentation characteristically. The diagnosis of rectal melanoma was therefore made after a search of the orbit and skin. Her recovery was uneventful.

### DISCUSSION

According to the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,<sup>4</sup> melanoma is defined as a growth characterized by pigmentation, the word itself dating back to 1838. Ten years later, the Transactions of the Pathological Society of London began to publish.<sup>5</sup> Access to it enabled me to come across a case of melanoma of the

clitoris.<sup>6</sup> In this context, among the Igbos of Nigeria, melanomas usually originated in the foot and even scarcely in the eyes,<sup>7</sup> from which primaries are prone to originate.<sup>8</sup>

Incidentally, there is a tendency for researchers to lump together the anus and rectum.<sup>9-11</sup> This trend is not good enough in scientific communication.

An Indian paper concerned the example of a 43-year-old woman.<sup>12</sup> This compares well with our 40-year-old case. From the Netherlands, the age was 41 years.<sup>13</sup> Surprisingly, the two cases reported from Japan were aged 66 years and 84 years respectively.<sup>14</sup>

In conclusion, all reports indicate that rectal origin of melanoma is a rarity. Therefore, cases of it are worthy of documentation from all over the world.

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