ECTOPIC HAMARTOMATOUS THYMOMA PRESENTING AS A THYROGLOSSAL CYST A CASE STUDY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

Ectopic hamartomatous thymoma is an uncommon benign soft-tissue tumor located in the lower neck (possibly of branchial origin), with fewer than 100 cases documented worldwide. This tumor lacks thymic differentiation and does not exhibit histological hamartomatous features; hence, the name 'ectopic hamartomatous thymoma' is considered a misnomer. The term 'biphenotypic branchioma' has recently been proposed to reflect its mesodermal and endodermal origins.

CASE PRESENTATION

A 60-year-old man presented with a painless lump in the anterior midline of his lower neck. The lump had gradually increased in size and was slightly tender on palpation. There was no history of trauma or previous surgical intervention.

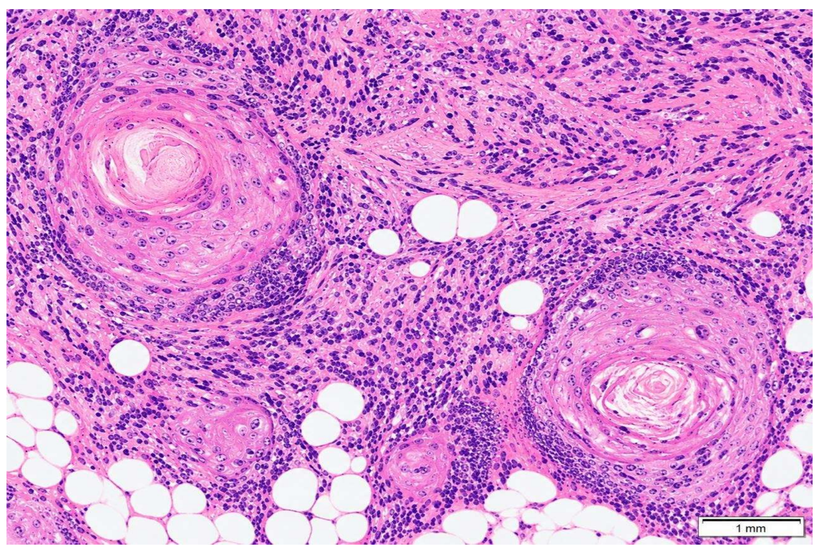
Neck ultrasonography showed a well-defined, superficial lesion with heterogeneous echogenicity, measuring 84 × 43 mm, without an apparent connection to the thyroid gland. There was no evidence of retrosternal extension. The findings were suggestive of an infected thyroglossal cyst. The mass was subsequently excised and sent for histopathological examination.

GROSS EXAMINATION

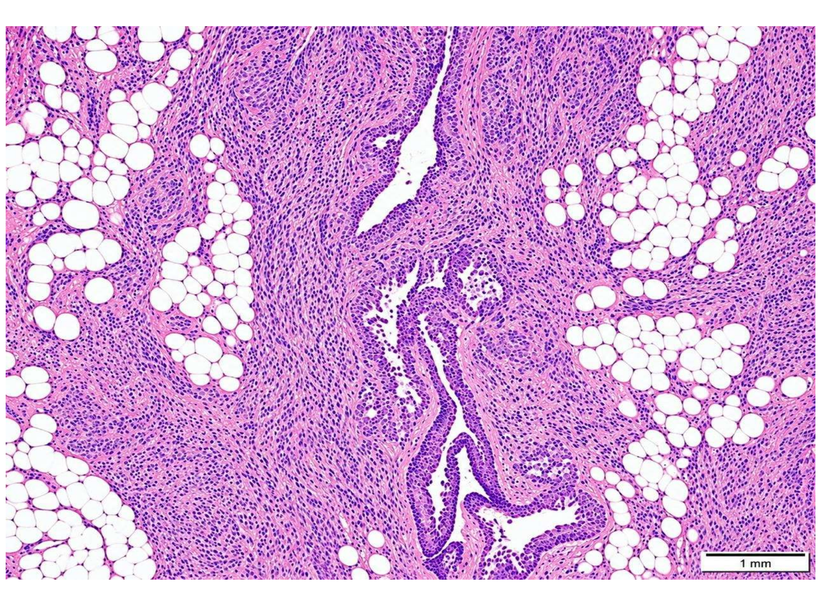
On gross examination, the tumor measured 85 × 50 mm. It was well circumscribed and had a firm, white-yellow cut surface with a few cystic areas containing clear fluid.



Gross cut surface



Squamous epithelial nests

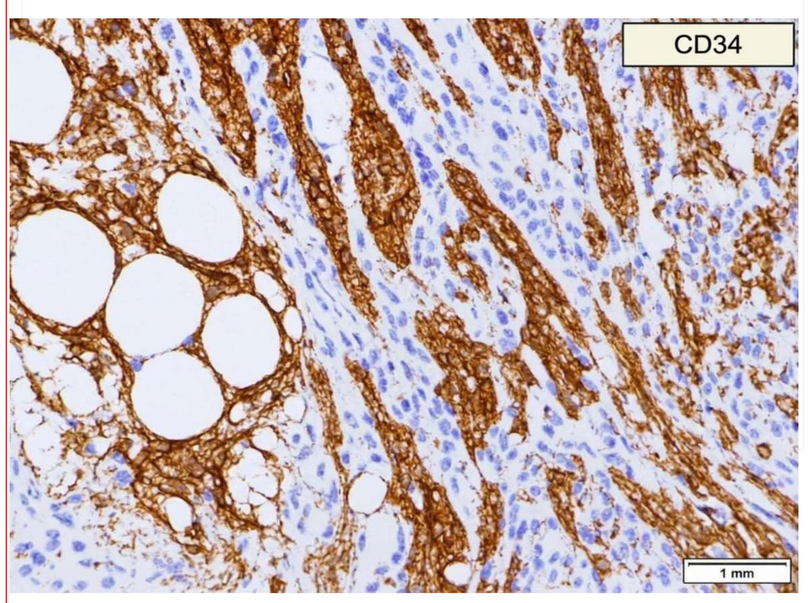


Glandular elements in a mesenchymal and adipocytic background

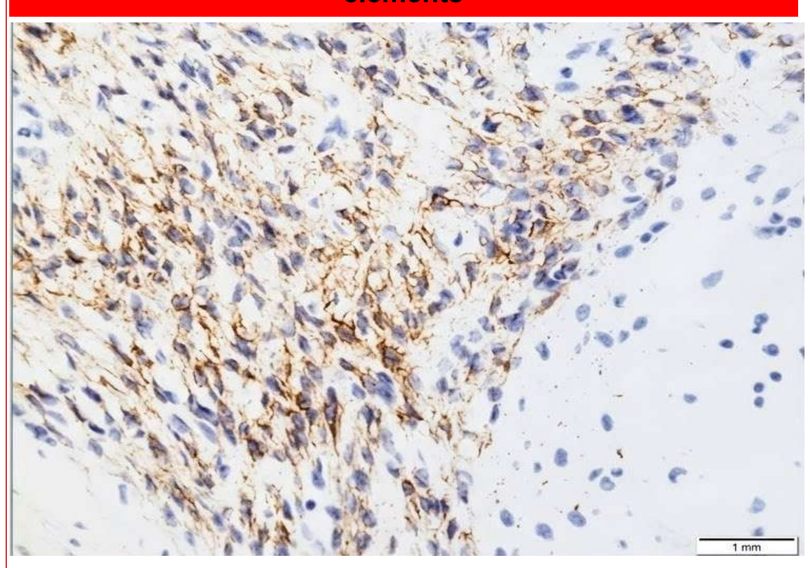
Well-circumscribed tumor margin

HISTOPATHOLOGIC DESCRIPTION

Microscopically, the tumor showed diverse histological patterns comprising bland spindle-shaped cells, squamous epithelial islands with focal keratin pearl formation, and glandular areas lined by cuboidal to columnar epithelium containing mucinous secretions. The background contained mature adipocytes and interspersed blood vessels. On immunohistochemistry (IHC), cytokeratin stained the epithelial elements, whereas CD34 stained the spindle cell areas.



CD34 Immunohistochemical staining of mesenchymal elements



Cytokeratin showing membranous staining of epithelial elements

CONCLUSION

In summary, ectopic hamartomatous thymoma is a rare, benign tumor of the anterior lower neck that may be misidentified. Accurate diagnosis requires comprehensive clinical and radiological assessment and, most critically, histological examination to guide appropriate management.

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