

Small nodular melanoma: the beginning of a life-threatening lesion. A clinical study on 11 cases

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ABSTRACT

Aims and background. Because of its high thickness, nodular melanoma often bears a poor prognosis. Thus, an earlier diagnosis of this type of lesion while it is still thin would be an important step in secondary prevention. The principal aim of the present study was to better define the initial clinical features of nodular melanoma to allow an early diagnosis. A secondary aim was to establish the prognosis of this type of lesion.

Methods. We retrospectively studied and illustrated the clinical features of 11 small (≤ 6 mm maximum diameter) cutaneous nodular melanomas seen and treated during a 10-year period. Prognostic characteristics of the various lesions were also described.

Results. The results of the study help to describe a small nodular melanoma as a dark and/or pink/red raised lesion, which may be evenly or unevenly colored, with well-defined borders, that often appears *de novo*. A correct clinical diagnosis was made in 7 of the cases. During a median follow-up of 6 years, none of the patients had local or distant relapses.

Conclusions. Detection of small nodular melanoma is feasible by accurate visual inspection, provided that physicians are aware of this type of lesion and maintain the index of suspicion at a high level to bring about curative surgery. Free full text available at www.tumorionline.it

Key words: diagnosis, nodular melanoma, prognosis, small melanoma.

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