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a single-institute experience with a focus on the histologic spectrum and clinical outcome

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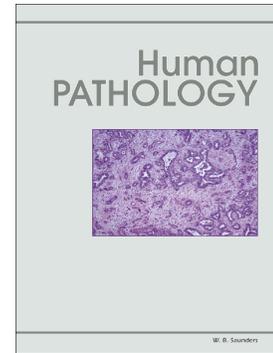
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Salivary gland epithelial neoplasms in pediatric population: a single-institute experience with a focus on the histologic spectrum and clinical outcome

To the Editor,

We want to congratulate Xu and colleagues on their comprehensive description of their material of pediatric epithelial salivary gland tumors [1]. The authors report on a large series and greatly expand the reported numbers of some very rare entities, and for the first time report prognostic factors for salivary gland carcinomas in this small, but important, patient group. However, the authors conclude that two-thirds of pediatric salivary gland tumors are malignant, and that this contrasts with the much smaller proportion of malignant salivary gland tumors in the adult population.

As in adults, the most frequent site for salivary gland tumors in the pediatric population is the parotid, and therefore the distribution of tumors in this location deserves special attention [2,3]. The higher proportion of malignancy in pediatric epithelial salivary gland tumors as compared to that in adults seems to be firmly established in the minds of many, and this has repeatedly been reported to be so in different materials through the last 45 years [2-4]. However, to the best of our knowledge, all these reports have been of institutional materials. In fact, only one nationwide study on this topic has been conducted. In this study by Stevens and colleagues, including 61 children with parotid gland tumors from a 16-year period in Denmark, only 15% of epithelial tumors were malignant [5]. In the study by Xu and colleagues, this number amounts to 58% [1]. While pediatric populations are defined differently in different studies (≤ 20 years in the study by Xu and < 18 years in the study by Stevens), we cannot help but point to the likelihood of referral bias as being the main, if not sole, reason for this very high proportion of carcinomas.

Therefore, while the impressive material in the study by Xu and colleagues is beautifully characterized and provides highly valuable information on prognostication of pediatric salivary gland carcinomas, the high proportion of malignant tumors, at least in the parotid gland, should be interpreted with caution.

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