

Immature teratoma with squamous cell carcinoma arising in the buccal soft tissue of a 14-year-old female

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Abstract Pediatric head and neck malignancies are rare, and even more unusual are extragonadal immature teratomas with malignant transformation. We present the case of a 14-year-old female with a one-year history of a progressively enlarging, fungating right buccal mass. Initially managed at another institution, she was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma, clinical stage T4aN2cM0, based on clinical, radiologic, and histopathologic findings. Surgery was recommended but declined; instead, she underwent chemoradiotherapy with incomplete tumor resolution. Upon referral to our tertiary center, she underwent wide excision of the mass, frozen, section right hemimandibulectomy with disarticulation, neck dissection of lymph node levels I–III, and anterolateral thigh flap reconstruction. Surprisingly, final histopathologic examination revealed the mass to be an immature teratoma with a malignant somatic component, specifically, squamous cell carcinoma, arising from the buccal soft tissue. This finding drastically altered the diagnostic understanding of the case. The unexpected diagnosis highlights the need for vigilance in evaluating malignancies in pediatric patients, particularly when the clinical picture does not fit typical patterns seen in adult cancers. Accurate diagnosis in such cases requires thorough correlation of patient demographics, clinical presentation, imaging, and most importantly, detailed histopathologic analysis. This case underscores the importance of considering rare and complex pathologies in children presenting with head and neck tumors. Early surgical management and proper tissue diagnosis are essential to achieve complete resection, prevent recurrence, and tailor appropriate therapy. Ultimately, this case challenges assumptions based on initial findings and emphasizes the role of multidisciplinary reassessment in unusual pediatric presentations.

Biography

Patricia Kate F. Regala is a medical doctor and resident in Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at the Philippine General Hospital. Her training encompasses a wide range of subspecialties including skull base surgery, rhinology, laryngology, and craniomaxillofacial reconstruction. With a background in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (Magna Cum Laude, UP Diliman) and a Doctor of Medicine degree (Cum Laude, UP College of Medicine), she bridges basic science with clinical care. Her research spans both molecular biology and clinical epidemiology, having co-authored works on neurobiology and public health, including a study on newborn screening accepted in *Acta Medica Philippina*. Her experience includes roles as a scientific writer, teleconsult physician, and rural health volunteer. Driven by a passion for both surgical precision and scientific inquiry, she is committed to advancing evidence-based, patient-centered care through interdisciplinary collaboration, outreach work, and continuous learning across both hospital and community settings.

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