LASER REMOVAL OF A PALPEBRAL MELANOMA IN A GREEN IGUANA

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ABSTRACT

A 5-yr-old female green iguana (Iguana iguana) presented for a lesion on the upper left palpebra of several weeks duration. The external left upper palpebra had a large white to grey crustling/scabbing lesion present covering it. The lesion was debrided of crusts and scabs to reveal an underlying caseous pocket. The lesion was cleansed with antiseptic, and systemic plus topical antibiotic therapy was initiated. The owner reported that the lesion had completely resolved after 2 wk of therapy.

The iguana re-presented 3 mo later for return of eyelid problems and being gravid. The owner reported eyelid crusting and scabbing returned within a few weeks of discontinuing antibiotic therapy and has slowly continued growing. The palpebral lesion had increased in size and was causing the eye to remain 75% closed. The owner again requested antibiotic therapy for treatment. No improvement occurred over the following 3 wk. The iguana presented a third time and was anesthetized for further evaluation and treatment. Crust and scab was debrided from the palpebra. Underlying was a pink slightly ulcerated tissue with a papillary surface. Sections of abnormal tissue were removed and submitted for histopathology. A barrier was placed between the eye and the inner palpebra and a CO₂ surgical laser (LX-20SI 20-Watt CO₂ laser, Luxar Corp., Bothell, WA) using a 4 mm tip and a setting of 4 watts was used to ablate abnormal external palpebral tissue down to a thin remaining inner palpebral tissue layer.

Histopathology of the mass showed dense cellular sheets of well differentiated round cells intermingled with variable numbers of lymphocytes and rare heterophils. The round cells had ovoid nuclei with vesicular chromatin staining and inconspicuous nucleoli. The cytoplasm was moderately abundant, eosinophilic, with little variation in cell size. Mitotic figures were rare. A Fontana stain revealed large numbers of dark brown staining pigment granules within the cytoplasm. The histologic lesions and staining were consistent with a melanocytic neoplasm.

At follow up 1 mo later for suture removal, the eye was open approximately 75% and the tissues of the external palpebra were healed with normal appearing scar tissue. At 2 mo post surgery per phone conversation with the owner the eyelid was unchanged. At 6 mo post surgery the iguana presented for follow-up and it appeared the mass had returned. The owner was considering further surgical options at the time this abstract was written.
This case describes a dermal melanoma on the palpebra of a green iguana. Melanoma has been reported previously in reptiles.\textsuperscript{1-5} Due to the tumor location on the palpebra of this iguana, complete surgical excision was not possible without removal of the eyelid. The use of a CO\textsubscript{2} surgical laser allowed for ablation of the neoplasm keeping the integrity of the inner palpebral tissues intact.

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LITERATURE CITED