🧿 Sebaceous Carcinoma Fact Sheet

Cancer Type: Rare Eye Cancer (Aggressive Eyelid Malignancy)
Primary Site: Eyelid (Meibomian glands, Zeis glands, or caruncle)
Subtype: Sebaceous Gland Carcinoma (SGC)
Website Reference: OcularCancer.com

🔍 What is Sebaceous Carcinoma?

Sebaceous carcinoma (SC) is a **rare and potentially life-threatening skin cancer** that originates in the **sebaceous (oil-producing) glands** of the eyelid. It most commonly arises in the **meibomian glands** (located in the upper or lower eyelids), but may also arise from **Zeis glands** or the **caruncle**.

This tumor is known for mimicking benign eyelid conditions like chalazion or blepharitis, which often leads to **delayed diagnosis** and **poorer outcomes**.

📊 Key Facts:

- **Prevalence:** Very rare; accounts for **0.5%–5.5%** of all eyelid malignancies
- **Most Common Site: Upper eyelid** (due to more meibomian glands)
- **Age of Onset:** Typically affects individuals aged **60+**
- **Gender:** Slight female predominance

- **Laterality:** Usually **unilateral**, but can be multifocal
- **Aggressiveness:** High potential for **local recurrence**, **orbital invasion**, and **lymphatic spread**

🧬 Causes & Risk Factors:

- No single known cause
- **Genetic conditions** like **Muir-Torre Syndrome** (a variant of Lynch Syndrome)
- **Immunosuppression** (e.g., post-transplant, HIV/AIDS)
- Prior **radiation exposure** to the head or neck
- History of **chronic eyelid inflammation** or persistent chalazion

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👁️ Signs and Symptoms:

Sebaceous carcinoma is often misdiagnosed due to its benign appearance. Common features include:

- Painless eyelid **nodule or thickening**
- Persistent or **recurrent chalazion**
- Loss of eyelashes (**madarosis**)
- Redness, **chronic conjunctivitis**, or **blepharitis**
- Spreading or yellowish growth on the **conjunctiva**
- Eyelid **distortion**, ulceration, or inflammation
- Visual disturbance (if tumor invades deeper structures)

🩺 Diagnosis:

Early and accurate diagnosis is critical, as SC is frequently misidentified. A comprehensive workup includes:

- **Detailed eyelid and ocular exam**
- **Biopsy** (excisional or incisional) for histopathologic evaluation
- **Map biopsies** of conjunctiva to detect **pagetoid spread**
- **Immunohistochemistry**: Positive for EMA, adipophilin
- **Imaging** (MRI or CT) to evaluate orbital and lymph node involvement
- **Sentinel lymph node biopsy** (optional for staging)

⚙️ Types of Sebaceous Carcinoma:

- **Ocular Sebaceous Carcinoma:**
  Originates in sebaceous glands of the eyelid; most common and aggressive form
- **Extraocular Sebaceous Carcinoma:**
  Occurs on the body (e.g., head, neck, trunk); less common and generally less aggressive

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🧪 Treatment Options:

Multimodal treatment is often necessary:

- **Surgical excision** (wide local excision or Mohs micrographic surgery)
- **Map biopsies and cryotherapy** for pagetoid conjunctival involvement
- **Orbital exenteration** (in advanced cases with orbital invasion)
- **Radiation therapy** (for non-surgical candidates or adjuvant use)
- **Chemotherapy**: Rare; may be used in metastatic or recurrent disease

- **Genetic counseling** for patients with signs of Muir-Torre syndrome

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🎯 Prognosis:

- **5-Year Survival Rate:** ~70–90% with early diagnosis and complete excision
- **Local Recurrence Rate:** Up to **30%**
- **Lymph Node Metastasis:** Occurs in ~20% of cases
- **Distant Metastasis:** Rare but possible (lungs, liver, brain)

🔄 Follow-Up & Monitoring:

- **Lifelong monitoring** recommended due to risk of recurrence
- Regular **ophthalmic exams**, including eyelid and conjunctival checks
- **Lymph node evaluation** during follow-ups
- **Systemic screening** if genetic syndrome suspected

❤️ Support & Resources:

- **Ocular oncologists** for diagnosis and treatment
- **Dermatologists** for skin cancer and Muir-Torre screening
- **Genetic counselors** for hereditary cancer syndromes
- **Cancer support groups** for coping with rare diagnoses
- **Mental health professionals** for anxiety and body image concerns

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📌 Key Takeaways:

- Sebaceous carcinoma is a rare but aggressive **eyelid cancer** that can be **life-threatening** if not diagnosed early.
- It often mimics benign eyelid conditions, causing **delayed diagnosis**.
- **Early biopsy and multidisciplinary care** are essential.
- **Long-term follow-up** is critical due to high recurrence and metastasis risk.
- Awareness of genetic links like **Muir-Torre syndrome** can save lives through early detection.

📚 For more information, support, and survivor stories, visit:

🌐 OcularCancer.com – A trusted resource for rare eye cancer awareness, education, and community support.