

# Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the larynx: a rare cause for airway obstruction

Dr Samuel Leedman, Dr Dougal Buchanan, Mr Paul Yuen

Department of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery, Fiona Stanley Hospital, Perth, Australia

## Introduction

Sarcomatoid carcinoma is a rare variant of squamous cell carcinoma in the head and neck with both carcinoma and sarcoma differentiation patterns. It can occur anywhere in the body, most commonly in the lungs and gastrointestinal tract. Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the larynx is an uncommon subsite (only 1% of cases), no consensus on best management of this cancer yet exists<sup>1, 2</sup>.

## Case Presentation

A 70-year-old man presented to the emergency department (ED) with stridor and in acute respiratory distress. This was on the background of 6 months worsening dysphonia, cough and shortness of breath. He was a nonsmoker, drank no alcohol and was not significantly comorbid.

Fiberoptic nasal endoscopy revealed a large left vocal cord tumour mass, almost completely obstructing the glottic opening in a ball-valve like manner.

The patient was taken to the operating theater and underwent an awake tracheostomy followed by transoral biopsy of the pedunculated left anterior true vocal cord mass under general anaesthetic.

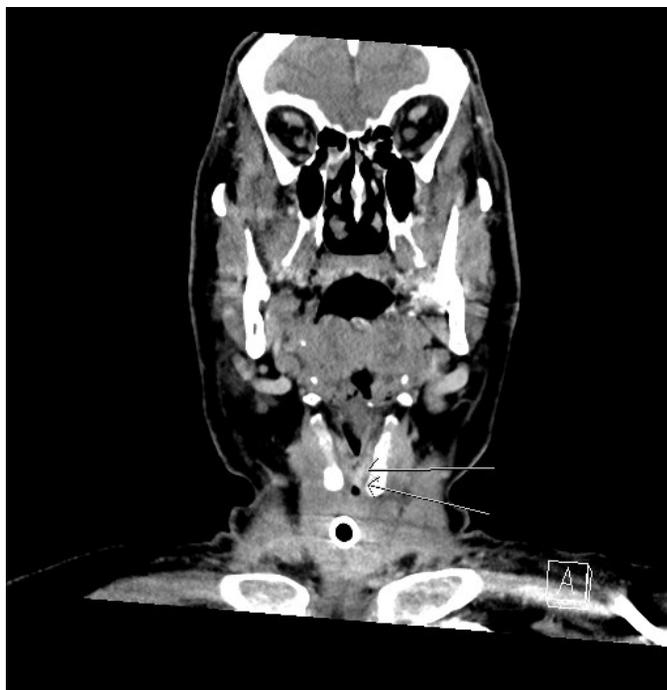
Histopathology revealed a sarcomatoid carcinoma. A PET scan and CT Neck and Chest confirmed this tumour to be a T1N0M0 cancer and the patient is now undergoing single modality radiotherapy treatment.

## Contact information

Dr Samuel Leedman | ENT Registrar

[Samuel.Leedman@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:Samuel.Leedman@health.wa.gov.au)

Fiona Stanley Hospital, Western Australia, Australia



**Figure 1:** Post biopsy coronal CT head and neck demonstrating residual left vocal cord tumour and tracheostomy tube in situ

## Discussion

Small studies and case series do exist reviewing the treatment of sarcomatoid carcinoma<sup>1, 2</sup>. It appears that for early stage tumours, excision and / or radiotherapy is sufficient, however later stage disease may require more aggressive treatment (cordectomy, partial/total laryngectomy)<sup>2</sup>. Larger studies are required for consensus on best management for this cancer.

This case describes a rare but important cause for laryngeal malignancy and airway obstruction in a man with no significant risk factors for malignancy of the head and neck.

## References

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2. Osorio-Velasquez A, Chiesa-Estomba CM, Betances-Reinoso FA, San Miguel-Fraile MP, Ortiz-Rey JA. [Sarcomatoid carcinoma of larynx. A histological challenge?]. *Rev Esp Patol*. 2018;51(1):30-3.