

## Pattern of skin cancer in Southwestern Saudi Arabia

*To the Editor*

I was interested to read that lymphoma is the second most common malignancy in the Al-Baha area after skin cancer.<sup>1</sup> It is also somewhat surprising that neither lung cancer nor prostate cancer appear in the top 5 list given.

Investigations into the local epidemiology of lymphoma would appear to be warranted, such as Epstein-Barr virus prevalence, and its association with lymphomas in the Al-Baha area.

Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is strongly associated with exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Before making a diagnosis of BCC in non-sun-exposed skin, one must confidently exclude histological mimics such as trichoblastoma, trichoblastic fibroma, trichoepithelioma and so forth, irrespective of skin color.

The exact histological diagnoses for their three cases of "adnexal carcinoma" would have been welcome.

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### ***Reply from the Author***

Thanks to Dr. Ansari for his interest in the article. As we stated in the article that lymphoma ranks second to skin cancer according to the record of King Fahad Hospital in Al-Baha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which is the main referral hospital in that

region. Lymphoma was followed by colorectal, breast and hepatocellular carcinoma. We fully agree with Dr. Ansari that the relatively high frequency of lymphoma has to be investigated in that region regarding the etiological factors and the pattern of lymphoma and this may lead to an interesting findings. Prostate carcinoma is relatively uncommon in Saudi population in general as reported before by many authors and the incidence is much less compared to the Western countries. Basal cell carcinoma is strongly associated with exposure to UV radiation. However, it is well documented that it is can arise anywhere in the body including non-exposed areas. The microscopic features of BCC are characteristic and with expert pathologist and with application of the strict criteria for the diagnosis, they can be easily differentiated from the other lesions based on simple microscopic evaluation without any special stains or studies. The 3 carcinomas documented in the skin include one sebaceous carcinoma, the second case was carcinoma with features consistent with malignant proliferating trichilemmal tumor and the third case was adnexal carcinoma not otherwise specified.

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### ***References***

1. Al-Maghrabi JA, Al-Ghamdi, Elhakeem HA. Pattern of skin cancer in Southwestern Saudi Arabia. *Saudi Med J* 2004; 25: 776-779.