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Therapy using injectable *Viscum album* in the treatment and survival of a patient diagnosed with hepatoid gland carcinoma: Case report

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Abstract. Cancer is a pathology of multifactorial cause and complex treatment. Often, despite strictly adhering to the recommended treatment protocols for a specific tumor type, there are instances where conventional therapies fail to yield success. This refractory state can render the disease fatal for patients. Hence, there's an increasing significance in developing therapeutics that aim to effectively control tumor growth while minimizing or avoiding side effects. In this context, homeopathy and *Viscum album* emerge as promising avenues, notably for enhancing the quality of life in treated patients. By current reports, these therapies contribute to overall well-being and, in rare cases, may lead to complete tumor remission. However, their primary role is often in controlling tumor growth, thereby managing the condition and resulting in chronic illness for patients. This fact does not necessarily denote harm, as patients typically maintain a clinically stable condition throughout treatment. The objective of this article is to present a case of hepatoid gland carcinoma that did not respond to conventional therapy but was subsequently managed through integrative treatment using injectable and subcutaneous homeopathic *Viscum album* in daily combined potencies. This treatment approach successfully maintained the patient's optimal quality of life for over 12 months.

Keywords: Cancer, carcinoma, homeopathy

Terapia Viscum album injetável no tratamento e sobrevida de paciente diagnosticado com carcinoma hepatóide: Relato de caso

Resumo. O câncer é uma patologia de causa multifatorial e tratamento complexo. Muitas vezes, apesar de aderir estritamente aos protocolos de tratamento recomendados para um tipo específico de tumor, há casos em que as terapias convencionais não conseguem alcançar sucesso terapêutico. Este estado refratário pode tornar a enfermidade fatal para os pacientes. Consequentemente, há uma importância crescente no desenvolvimento de terapêuticas que visam controlar efetivamente o crescimento do tumor, minimizando ou não provocando efeitos colaterais. Neste sentido, a homeopatia e o *Viscum album* surgem como caminhos promissores para melhorar a qualidade de vida dos pacientes tratados. De acordo com os relatos atuais, estas terapias contribuem para o bem-estar geral e, em casos raros, podem levar à remissão completa do tumor. No entanto, o seu papel principal é muitas vezes controlar o crescimento tumoral, tornando assim uma doença crônica para os pacientes. Esse fato, normalmente, mantém quadro clinicamente estável durante todo o tratamento. O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar um caso de carcinoma de glândula hepatóide que não respondeu à terapia convencional, mas foi posteriormente tratado por meio do tratamento integrativo com *Viscum album* homeopático injetável, de forma

subcutânea em potências combinadas, com a administração diária. Esta abordagem de tratamento manteve com sucesso a qualidade de vida ideal do paciente por mais de 12 meses.

Palavras-chave: Carcinoma, câncer, homeopatia

Terapia *Viscum album* inyectable en el tratamiento y supervivencia de paciente diagnosticado con carcinoma hepatoide: Reporte de caso

Resumen. El cáncer es una patología de causa multifactorial y de tratamiento complejo. A menudo, a pesar de seguir estrictamente los protocolos de tratamiento recomendados para un tipo de tumor específico, hay casos en los que las terapias convencionales no logran tener éxito. Este estado refractario puede hacer que la enfermedad sea fatal para los pacientes. Por lo tanto, existe una importancia cada vez mayor en el desarrollo de terapias que tengan como objetivo controlar eficazmente el crecimiento del tumor mientras minimizan o no muestran efectos secundarios. En este contexto, la homeopatía y el *Viscum album* emergen como vías prometedoras, en particular para mejorar la calidad de vida de los pacientes tratados. Según los informes actuales, estas terapias contribuyen al bienestar general y, en casos raros, pueden conducir a la remisión completa del tumor. Sin embargo, su función principal suele ser controlar el crecimiento del tumor, controlando así la afección y provocando enfermedades crónicas en los pacientes. Este hecho no necesariamente denota daño, ya que los pacientes suelen mantener una condición clínicamente estable durante todo el tratamiento. El objetivo de este artículo es presentar un caso de carcinoma de hepatoide que no respondió a la terapia convencional pero que posteriormente fue manejado mediante tratamiento integrativo utilizando *Viscum album* homeopático inyectable y subcutáneo en potencias combinadas diarias. Este enfoque de tratamiento mantuvo con éxito la calidad de vida óptima del paciente durante más de 12 meses.

Palabras clave: Carcinoma, cáncer, homeopatía

Introduction

Hepatoid carcinomas affect the perianal glands ([Engelsdorff et al., 2022](#); [Romano et al., 2021](#); [Silva et al., 2005](#)), also recognized as hepatoid glands, which are sebaceous glands situated in the subcutaneous tissue near the anal region of dogs ([Baghban & Bayati, 2020](#); [Rodrigues et al., 2017](#); [Telles et al., 2017](#); [Wajczyk et al., 2019](#)). Hepatoid carcinomas are malignant tumors that develop in the perianal region, demonstrating a more aggressive behavior than adenomas ([Pisani et al., 2006](#); [Turek & Withrow, 2013](#)). Tumors originating from the perianal gland are frequently observed in dogs ([Mutinelli et al., 2007](#)), predominantly affecting sexually intact male dogs, typically between the ages from 7 to 14. The prognosis of hepatoid carcinoma is generally favorable, with few reported cases of metastasis ([Jardim et al., 2018](#); [Tunç et al., 2014](#)). The recommended therapy involves a surgical procedure that adequately removes the safety margins. This approach is deemed invasive and should be followed by radiotherapy ([Turek & Withrow, 2013](#)). Additionally, chemotherapy is often considered in many cases.

Indeed, cancer presents a global public health concern, and the anticipation of new cases in both human and animal populations is increasing, raising significant alarm. Therefore, there is a rising interest among the scientific community in medications that prioritize enhancing the quality of life for patients while minimizing side effects. The focus is maximizing the effectiveness of controlling tumor growth ([Lucena Júnior et al., 2021](#); [Valle, 2020](#)).

Consequently, complementary therapies are becoming unique approaches for treating and maintaining cancer patients. Injectable homeopathic *Viscum album* emerges as an excellent treatment option in these cases. The objective of this article was to report the treatment outcomes of a canine patient diagnosed with hepatoid carcinoma refractory to conventional treatment, showcasing excellent results through an alternative approach.

Case report

An 11-year-old male Shitzu weighing 11.8 kg was seen at NaturalPet Veterinary Clinic (Brasilia, Brazil) in December 2022. The dog's daily diet comprised commercial dog food. The owner initially

noticed a rapid increase in volume in the left perianal region, which quickly progressed, leading to ulceration within three days of detection of the volume increase (Figure 1A). Surgical removal was advised by a conventional veterinary clinic eight months before the visit to the NaturalPet Clinic and the biopsy resulted in hepatoid gland carcinoma. Six months prior to the appointment at NaturalPet Clinic, the nodule was surgically excised with appropriate safety margins, approximately 1 cm, and a castration procedure was also performed. Following this procedure, the animal exhibited another increase in volume within the same region after one month. The dog was referred to an oncologist veterinarian who opted to perform another surgical removal of the nodule along with local electrochemotherapy. After 30 days of this latest procedure, the patient started the first session of intravenous chemotherapy. However, the patient experienced side effects from the procedure, including vomiting, diarrhea, and apathy. Consequently, the owner sought the Natural Veterinary Medicine service at the NaturalPet Clinic to treat the patient due to the recurrence of the condition and the adverse reactions experienced during chemotherapy. As a result, the owner opted for a less invasive and less detrimental treatment for their pet's health. During anamnesis, the owner reported that the animal appeared sleepier than normal, slightly more apathetic, less interested in playing, and less enthusiastic during walks. However, the appetite was normal, as were other physiological functions. In addition, he was orally medicated every 8 hours with dipyrone (30 mg/kg). They also described the animal as gluttonous, affectionate, intelligent, jealous, imposing when faced with opposition, and not inclined to display submissive behavior to any stimuli. Additionally, they noted that the pet tends to feel very warm but enjoys basking in the morning sunlight. During the physical examination, the patient exhibited normocolored mucous membranes, heart and respiratory rates within the expected range for age and species, and maintained an active, alert behavior, responding properly to external stimuli. Submandibular and popliteal lymph nodes appeared to be of normal size and shape, and the body temperature was recorded as 37.8°C. Blood was collected for hematological and biochemical analyses.



Figure 1. A. Appearance of the lesion when the patient underwent the first surgery, showcasing an ulcerated lesion of approximately 1.5cmX1.3cm within the medial left perianal region. B. Appearance of the perianal region after 18 months of diagnosis.

The treatment was orally prescribed, as follows: *Arsenicum album* 30CH; *Podophyllum* 30CH; *Nitric acidum* 30CH, 30mL, 10% alcohol, three drops, BID for 30 days; *Phosphorus* 200CH, 30mL, 10% alcohol, three drops, SID for 30 days; Vitamin C 500mg (Cewin®), one tablet, SID for 30 days; Vitamin D3 400IU/drop (Addera®), five drops, SID for 30 days; and Curcumin 180mg, Piperine 30mcg, *Ganoderma lucidum* 200mg, one capsule, SID for 30 days. Intravenous (IV) medication (*Viscum album* D2) was performed in the clinic after the physical examination. A subcutaneous (CS) injectable medication was also prescribed: *Viscum album* D3, D6, D9, D12, and D30 in daily combinations.

Results

After 30 days of treatment, the patient returned for a follow-up examination. The owner reported faithfully adhering to the prescribed treatment and observed a substantial improvement in the patient's overall condition. The pet appeared more cheerful and did not exhibit any discomfort in the anal region throughout the treatment period. After conducting a physical examination of the patient, the injectable medication was maintained, along with *Arsenicum album* 30CH; *Podophyllum* 30CH; *Nitric acidum* 30CH, 30mL, 10% alcohol, three drops, BID for 30 days; and *Phosphorus* 200CH, 30mL, 10% alcohol, three drops, SID for 30 days. The patient remained stable for six months while receiving the injectable medication every other day. However, upon returning, the complaint of volume increase in the anus was reported. The ultrasound image revealed a nodule in the perianal region, precisely where a nodule had been previously removed. Apart from the noted condition related to the nodule, the patient exhibited perfect clinical and laboratory conditions with no other alterations. At that point, the medication protocol was intensified to a daily administration, employing combinations of potencies, to be continued for 60 days. After 90 days, the animal returned for a follow-up examination and exhibited excellent clinical condition. The inspection of the perineal region revealed it was in perfect and intact condition ([Figure 1B](#)). A subsequent ultrasound was conducted, revealing no visible structure in the area. Therefore, the patient has been surviving for approximately 18 months, with the last 12 months showing no evident tumor recurrences. The patient's quality of life remains favorable as there's no indication of pain, the appetite is normal, and there's no mass in the previously affected region.

Discussion

There is a global increase in demand for therapies that are less invasive yet more effective than traditional treatments, aiming to match or surpass their effectiveness levels. In instances where alternative therapies might not match or exceed the effectiveness of conventional treatments, the emphasis should still be on controlling tumor progression or slowing down its growth and development. The priority lies in enhancing the patient's quality of life throughout the treatment process, as demonstrated in the present report.

Hepatoid gland carcinoma is a malignant glandular tumor typically seen in middle-aged, intact male dogs, accounting for approximately 3% to 21% of reported cases ([Liptak, 2013](#); [Vail et al., 2019](#); [Withrow et al., 2020](#)). Surgery is considered the primary treatment for this type of tumor. The recommended approach involves complete mass excision with a 1 to 3 cm margin. This excision might extend to the perineal skin and involves the removal of part of the external anal sphincter muscle, distal rectum, and potentially one or both anal sacs ([Tobias & Johnston, 2013](#)). According to [Fossum \(2021\)](#), the surgical procedure should be associated with adjuvant treatments indicated for perianal tumors, such as radiotherapy, therapy with cytostatic agents, and electrochemotherapy.

Supporting the findings of [Fossum \(2021\)](#) and [Tobias & Johnston \(2013\)](#), who advocate for surgical excision with a safety margin of 1-3 cm as the preferred treatment, this case detailed in the article underwent surgery following this guideline. However, the initial attempt was not efficacious, as the issue recurred later despite the safety margin being maintained during the procedure. In a subsequent procedure, a second excision was performed along with local electrochemotherapy, as suggested by ([Fossum, 2021](#)). Unfortunately, this treatment approach did not yield success, as the tumor recurred within 30 days, highlighting the aggressive nature of the tumor.

The injectable *Viscum album* therapy was chosen as the treatment approach based on [Valle's \(2020\)](#) report on the advantages of complementary therapies in managing refractory cancer cases. When administered daily, this therapy demonstrated significant value, maintaining stability in the animal's condition. This outcome might imply that *Viscum album* did not lead to complete tumor remission; however, it effectively managed the tumor, offering the patient an improved quality of life. Consequently, the condition assumes a chronic disease character. [Valle & Carvalho \(2021\)](#) note the potential to shift the trajectory of an oncological disease, either toward complete remission or as a controllable chronic condition that ensures the well-being of the treated patient. The patient persists in good health, continuing his regular daily activities as of the completion of this article.

Conclusion

The demand for novel therapies to address cancer is increasing, especially with the rise in cases of refractory cancer patients. The current findings and numerous others in the literature support using complementary therapies, particularly injectable *Viscum album* therapy, as a feasible option for such treatments. The case outlined in this article directly affirms the efficacy of this therapy.

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