

Glomus Tumor and Hemangiopericytoma

The glomus tumor and the hemangiopericytoma are vascular tumors that arise from the hemangiopericyte which is a cell seen at the periphery of the capillary vascular network whose normal function is to regulate blood flow through the capillary tube system. Therefore, these are tumors that arise from cells outside the endothelial tube whereas hemangiomas originate from endothelial cells. The glomus tumor is a small and usually subcutaneous tumor, measuring less than one centimeter in diameter, and represents 1.6 per cent of all soft tissue tumors. It occurs equally in men and women between the ages of 20 and 40 years. The most common location for the glomus tumor is in the subungual area of a digit where it is readily visible, has a reddish-purple color and is exquisitely tender on palpation. Subcutaneous glomus tumors that occur in the hand, wrist, forearm and foot area are invisible to physical diagnosis and characteristically present with localized lancinating pain that persists in the exact location of origin until treated surgically by a minimal but wide resection.

The hemangiopericytoma arises from the same hemangiopericytes in the capillary system but is a larger tumor seen in more proximal areas, usually deep in muscle bellies about the thigh or retroperitoneal area of the pelvis. The smaller tumors are usually benign but the larger, more aggressive pericytomas can be malignant and therefore deserve more aggressive treatment with wide resection followed by postoperative radiation therapy because of the chance of local recurrence.