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성인 환자에서 점액낭종으로 추정되어
절제한 병변에서 예기치 않게
점액표피암이 진단된 증례 보고

(Unexpected Diagnosis of Mucoepidermoid
Carcinoma Following Excision of a Presumed
Mucocele in an Adult Patient: A Case Report)



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Background: Mucoceles are common benign lesions of the minor salivary glands. They typically present as painless, fluctuant swellings and are often treated with simple surgical excision. In contrast, mucoepidermoid carcinoma (MEC) is the most common malignant salivary gland tumor. Although MEC most commonly arises in the parotid gland, involvement of intraoral minor salivary glands is uncommon and may clinically resemble benign lesions such as mucoceles. This report presents a case in which a lesion clinically suspected to be a mucocele was unexpectedly diagnosed as MEC after excision.

Methods: A 72-year-old male presented with a 6-month history of a painless, slowly enlarging swelling on the right lower lip (Fig 1). The lesion intermittently changed in size and was associated with a history of minor lip-biting trauma. Clinical examination revealed a 1.5 × 1.2 cm soft, dome-shaped submucosal nodule with intact mucosa and no ulceration or cervical lymphadenopathy. A provisional diagnosis of mucocele was made. The lesion was surgically excised under local anesthesia and submitted for histopathologic examination (Fig 2).

Results: Microscopic evaluation revealed a neoplasm composed of mucous-producing, intermediate, and epidermoid cells arranged in cystic and solid patterns. Intracytoplasmic mucin was identified without significant atypia or high mitotic activity (Fig 3). Findings were consistent with low-grade MEC. Surgical margins were clear, and imaging showed no regional or distant metastasis. No recurrence was observed at 12-month follow-up.

Conclusions: Malignant salivary gland tumors may clinically mimic benign lesions such as mucoceles. Routine histopathologic examination of excised oral lesions is essential to ensure accurate diagnosis and appropriate management.



Figure 1. Preoperative clinical photograph showing a small, dome-shaped submucosal swelling on the right lower lip with intact overlying mucosa. The lesion appeared soft and fluctuant without ulceration, clinically suggestive of a mucocele.



Figure 2. Excised specimen measuring approximately 1.5 cm in greatest dimension, appearing as a well-circumscribed, tan-pink soft tissue nodule.

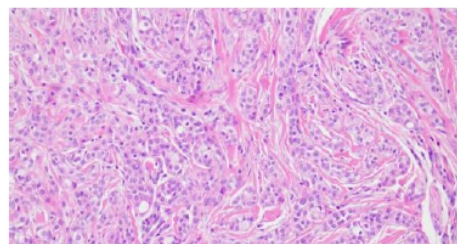


Figure 3. Hematoxylin and eosin-stained section demonstrating a neoplasm composed of mucous-producing cells, intermediate cells, and epidermoid cells arranged in cystic and solid patterns within fibrous stroma.