

Abstract 23**Spontaneous Late Carotid-Cutaneous Fistula Following Radical Neck Dissection**

W. Anthony Lee, M.D., Filiberto Rodriguez, M.D., Charles Carmeci, M.D., Ronald L. Dalman, M.D. From the Division of Vascular Surgery, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305. Address correspondences to: W. Anthony Lee, M.D., Section of Vascular Surgery, University of Florida, P.O. Box 100286, Gainesville, FL 32610-0286

Purpose: To present an unusual case of a spontaneous carotid-cutaneous fistula and its surgical management.

Case Description: The patient is a 50 year old man who presented with spontaneous, pulsatile bleeding from his left neck. He had previously undergone a left radical neck dissection four years ago for tonsillar squamous cell carcinoma with postoperative radiation therapy. He had no evidence of recurrent cancer on followup. The patient was urgently taken to the operating room for a neck exploration. Proximal control of the common carotid artery was obtained at the base of the neck and distal control of the internal and external carotid arteries was obtained above the angle of the mandible. The area of the bleeding and the worst scarring was initially avoided. A reversed saphenous vein bypass was placed as an interposition graft from the common to the internal carotid artery, with ligation of the external carotid artery. The entire carotid bifurcation with the adherent skin where the bleeding had originated was excised. Inspection of the bivalved specimen demonstrated a small opening from the carotid bulb to the skin that easily admitted a small probe. Soft tissue coverage of the wound was achieved using a pectoralis major myocutaneous flap. The patient awoke neurologically intact and was discharged without complications on postoperative day 7.

Conclusion: Surgical revascularization of the internal carotid artery covered by a well-vascularized soft tissue flap should be considered a viable alternative to ligation in the management of late carotid complications following radical neck dissection.