



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Journal of Surgery Case Reports

journal homepage: www.casereports.com

Pulmonary metastatic angiosarcoma from scalp with fatal complication: A case report

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 31 December 2016

Received in revised form 16 February 2017

Accepted 16 February 2017

Available online 20 February 2017

Keywords:

Hemopneumothorax

Scalp angiosarcoma

Chemotherapy

Case report

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Angiosarcoma is a rare malignant neoplasm with poor prognosis. Angiosarcoma of the scalp is frequently recurs locally, and metastasizes early despite various treatments. The common sites of metastatic are lung, liver, and lymph nodes. Pulmonary metastasis with hemoptysis and pneumothorax is rare but threatening.

PRESENTATION OF CASE: A 77-year-old male had recurrent angiosarcoma of the scalp even with post operation radiotherapy. At the same time, recurrent pneumothorax was noted, thus he underwent wedge resection of the right upper lobe of the lung plus pleural biopsy. The final pathologic report of cystic lesions showed metastatic Angiosarcoma. He received intravenous paclitaxel and the lung lesions dramatically diminished subsequently.

DISCUSSION: Pulmonary metastasis from soft tissue sarcoma had fatal complications and poor prognosis. Metastases of AS to the lung have a well-described morphology on CT scan, but appear to be hypometabolic on PET scan and are easily misinterpreted as benign cysts.

CONCLUSION: Angiosarcoma is a rare but highly vascular invasive endothelial tumor that generally metastasizes to the lung. It could cause repeated hemoptysis pneumothorax and pleural effusion. Preoperative chest CT may be recommended routinely. Aggressive treatment resulted in not only symptoms control but also good prognosis.

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1. Introduction

Angiosarcoma (AS) most commonly arises from the skin and soft tissues. AS of the face and scalp in the elderly is a distinct subgroup of AS that tends to recur locally and to metastasize early despite various aggressive treatments, resulting in a poor prognosis. Complete surgical resection and postoperative radiation are recommended for the treatment of AS. The most predominant metastatic sites of AS is the lung and pleura. The bone and liver are secondary common sites [1]. Management of metastatic lesions of the lung is important because pulmonary metastasis of AS frequently induces severe complications. Here we report the successful management of pulmonary complications of scalp AS with paclitaxel administration. The present work has been reported in accordance with the SCARE criteria [2].

Abbreviation: AS, Angiosarcoma.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijscr.2017.02.026>

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2. Case presentation

A 77-year-old Taiwanese male heavy smoker had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease for 40 years. Itchy spots over his left frontoparietal scalp were noted 1 year before admission and seborrheic keratosis was initially suspected. He underwent topical treatment in the clinic. He presented at our hospital for a second opinion 3 months ago because of disease progression with ulceration and bleeding in response to touch. Cutaneous AS (Fig. 1) of the scalp was confirmed by biopsy. Wide excision with free radial forearm flap coverage was performed. After surgery, the patient underwent adjuvant radiotherapy (60 Gy in 30 fractions). Unfortunately, multiple protruding lesions developed on the contralateral side of the scalp 1 month after surgery, and local recurrence was suspected. The patient was admitted and underwent surgical treatment with wide excision plus a free anterolateral thigh split-thickness skin flap. The endotracheal tube was removed 2 days after surgery. The patient developed a sudden onset of hemoptysis and shortness of breath 3 days after surgery. Chest radiography revealed bilateral pneumothorax (Fig. 2A). The patient underwent bilateral tube thoracotomy. A computed tomography (CT) scan of the chest showed multiple cystic lesions with mild surrounding ground-



Fig. 1. Cutaneous angiosarcoma of scalp measuring 6 × 4.5 cm in size was confirmed by tissue biopsy.

glass opacities in both lungs and minimal right pleural effusion (Fig. 2B). Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease with secondary pneumothorax complicated with hemorrhage because of anticoagulant medication was suspected. One week later, after removal of the chest tube, the patient sustained a recurrent pneumothorax, and was sent immediately to our hospital where a chest radiograph revealed right side pneumothorax. A tube thoracotomy was performed. In this hospitalization, video-assisted thoracoscopic surgery with wedge resection of the right upper lobe of the lung plus pleural biopsy was performed. The results of pathological examination for cystic lesions were compatible with metastatic AS (Fig. 3). In addition, the cytology of the pleural fluid was positive for

malignant cells. Mechanical pleurodesis was performed to reduce the recurrent pneumothorax. The patient underwent intravenous paclitaxel administration at a fixed dose of 90 mg weekly over 2 weeks. The linear and nodular infiltration of both lungs dramatically diminished over sequential chest radiographs.

3. Discussion

AS is a very rare vasoformative malignancy arising from either blood or lymphatic vessels. Cutaneous lesions on the scalp or the face are the most common sites of origin. Head and neck AS tends to affect older Caucasian men. The most common sites of metastasis are lung, liver, and lymph nodes. The clinical manifestations of patients with pulmonary metastasis are variable, but the most common symptom is hemoptysis [3]. In the case presented here, the patient had hemoptysis together with hemopneumothorax and pleural infiltration. A small number of cases have been reported to present with thin-walled pulmonary cysts that developed and enlarged within a few months [4]. The role of positron emission tomography (PET)-CT in evaluation of distal metastasis of AS is not clear. Metastases of AS to the lung have a well-described morphology on CT scan, but appear to be hypometabolic on PET scan and are easily misinterpreted as benign cysts [5]. Usage of F-18 fluorodeoxyglucose PET/CT as an imaging tool for staging and restaging of cutaneous AS of the scalp has also been reported [6]. In the present case, there was no uptake by the metastatic lung lesion observed on PET-CT scan before surgery. As AS of the scalp is rapidly progressive, the potential of metastatic lesions should be considered, and a preoperative chest CT may be recommended.

Recurrent spontaneous hemopneumothorax associated with metastatic tumors is rare. Hemopneumothorax is thought to be associated with the rupture of cysts that are involved with a neoplasm. Tateishi et al. [7] proposed four pathophysiological mechanisms of the formation of cystic metastatic lung lesions: (1) excavation of a solid nodular lesion, (2) infiltration of tumor cells

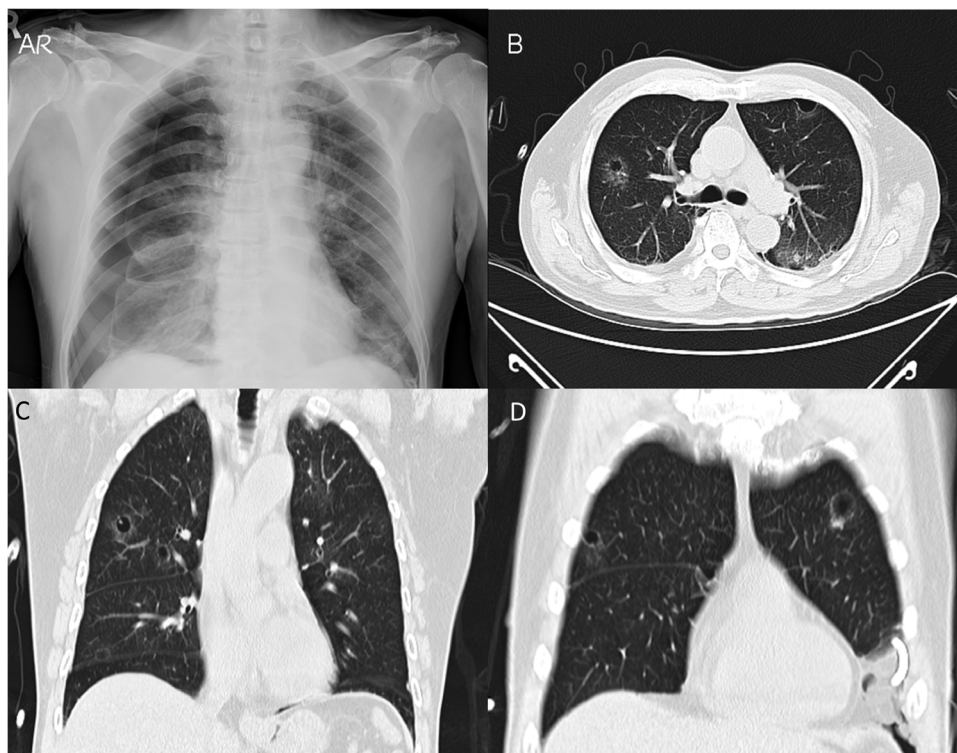


Fig. 2. (A) Chest X-ray showing right side spontaneous pneumothorax. (B) Axial view of high-resolution computed tomography of the thorax demonstrating multiple cystic lesions with mild surrounding ground-glass opacities in both lungs.

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