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Case Report

Orbital progressive transformation of germinal centers as part of the spectrum of IgG4-related ophthalmic disease: Clinicopathologic features of three cases

M. Adelita Vizcaino [a]; Shannon S. Joseph [b]; Charles G. Eberhart [a,*]

Abstract

Progressive transformation of germinal centers (PTGC) is a form of follicular hyperplasia recently associated with immunoglobulin G4-related disease (IgG4-RD), but the ophthalmic manifestations of this combination are poorly described. In this retrospective case series, we present three cases of IgG4-related orbital disease (IgG4-ROD) showing varying degrees of PTGC involving the orbit and lacrimal gland. Three adult women presented with ill-defined lacrimal gland enlargement. Histologic sections showed variable fibrosis and large, irregular lymphoid follicles with prominent mantle zones penetrating the germinal centers, highlighted by Bcl-2 and/or IgD immunostains. The interfollicular areas contained a mixture of plasma cells, scattered histiocytes and eosinophils. Mixed T and B-cells were present, and no signs of monoclonality were identified. All cases showed more than 100 IgG4 positive cells per high power field. Epstein-Barr virus in situ hybridization performed in one case was negative. The serum IgG4 level was tested in one case and showed elevation above the normal range. After 2–10 months of follow-up, the patients showed either near-complete resolution or no remaining signs of ophthalmic disease. Increasing awareness of these PTGC in extra-nodal locations, including the orbit, may provide a better understanding of the histologic spectrum of this disease.

Keywords: IgG4-related disease, Orbit, Lacrimal gland, Progressive transformation of germinal centers, Follicular hyperplasia

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Introduction

Progressive transformation of germinal centers (PTGC) is an idiopathic form of reactive follicular hyperplasia mainly presenting in the lymph nodes, characterized by enlarged and irregular follicles with a predominance of mantle zone lymphocytes. These mantle zone lymphocytes invade into the germinal centers and can result in follicle lysis. An association with immunoglobulin G4-related disease (IgG4-RD) has been recently described in lymph nodes, and PTGC is now recognized as one of the five histologic subtypes of IgG4-RD.[1–3] Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) infection has been identified in over 50% of IgG4-related lymphadenopathy, and its presence in the PTGC-subtype is associated with systemic lymphadenopathy and/or extra-nodal involvement.[4]

Although the true incidence is unknown, ophthalmic involvement by IgG4-RD is not rare, and a significant number of patients will have disease elsewhere at presentation, or develop it subsequently.[5] More than 50% have unilateral or bilateral lacrimal gland lesions, followed in decreasing frequency by trigeminal nerve, extraocular muscles, orbital fat, circumscribed orbital masses, eyelid lesions, nasolacrimal

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[a] Department of Pathology, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD, USA
[b] Department of Ophthalmology, Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD, USA

* Corresponding author at: Ophthalmology and Oncology, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, 720 Rutland Ave – Ross Building 558, Baltimore, MD 21205, USA.
e-mail addresses: mvizcai2@jhmi.edu (M.A. Vizcaino), sjshan@med.umich.edu (S.S. Joseph), ceberha@jhmi.edu (C.G. Eberhart).

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duct, lacrimal sac, and optic nerve.[6,7] Thus, for ocular adnexal and orbital disease, the term IgG4-related ophthalmic disease (IgG4-ROD) is recommended.

Consensus criteria for the histopathologic diagnosis of IgG4-RD proposed in 2012 required both morphologic and immunohistochemical features. Three major histologic features were: (1) dense lymphoplasmocytic inflammation, (2) fibrosis, which may be variably present and focally show a storiform pattern, and (3) obliterative phlebitis. Thresholds for IgG4-positive (IgG4+) cells and their ratio to IgG-positive (IgG+) cells, defined using immunohistochemistry, varied by site. In the lacrimal gland, the proposed numbers were over 100. Because the microscopic findings were not as commonly found in the periocular tissues as other sites, revised criteria specific to ophthalmic disease were subsequently put forward by a Japanese consensus group.[8] These include an IgG4:IgG plasma cell ratio of 40% or above and/or >50 IgG4+ plasma cells per high power field (HPF), and do not require storiform fibrosis or phlebitis.[8,9]

Rare cases of extra-nodal PTGC have been reported in the orbit, oral cavity, large bowel, and skin, and a few cases of systemic PTGC-type IgG4-RD affecting the lacrimal gland and orbit have been previously described.[3,13] Here we report three cases of isolated IgG4-ROD with varying degrees of PTGC.

Case reports

A retrospective review of the pathology records (January, 2009 – December, 2016), dating from our first report of IgG4 in the orbit, for specimens with increased IgG4+ cells was performed and identified 11 cases of IgG4-related ophthalmic disease. These cases were reviewed and three with varying degrees of PTGC were identified (Table 1).

Case 1

The patient is a 55-year-old African-American woman with history of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection treated with highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), who presented with a right superolateral orbital lesion. A magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan showed an enlarged, right lacrimal gland measuring up to 2.3 × 1.1 × 2.2 cm, with low signal density on T1 and T2, and homogeneous contrast enhancement (Fig. 1A and B). An incisional biopsy was performed. Histologic sections showed lacrimal gland tissue with patchy fibrosis, diffuse lymphoplasmocytic inflammation, and numerous, irregularly enlarged lymphoid follicles with prominent mantle zones including lymphocytes extensively invading the germinal centers, as highlighted by Bcl-2 and IgD immunostains. Scattered eosinophils and histiocytes were also noted throughout the lesion. Immunohistochemical stains also showed a mixed T-cell (CD3) and B-cell (CD20) infiltrate. Flow cytometry did not identify a monoclonal population. IgG4 and IgG markers demonstrated an IgG4:IgG ratio over 70% and >100 IgG4+ plasma cells per HPF, which were mostly concentrated within germinal centers (Fig. 1C–H). EBV/EBER in situ hybridization was negative. Serum IgG4 levels were not tested. The patient was treated with prednisone (0.6 mg/kg daily for one month, then tapered 10% every two weeks) and the lesion was nearly completely resolved two months after surgery.

Case 2

The patient is a 71-year-old Asian woman with history of adenoid cystic carcinoma of the left maxilla and ethmoid 24 years ago treated with maxillectomy, radiation and reconstruction of the orbital floor, and a ''left neck lesion'' treated with excisional biopsy and diagnosed as Warthin tumor in 2013. Three years later, she presented with a lesion involving the right lacrimal gland and orbital tissue. An incisional biopsy was performed. Histologically, the lacrimal gland and fibroadipose tissue were diffusely infiltrated by chronic inflammation with numerous, enlarged, irregular lymphoid follicles with abundant mantle zone lymphocytes that focally invaded the germinal centers, highlighted by a Bcl-2 immunohistochemical stain. CD3 and CD20 immunostains showed a mixed T-cell and B-cell population. There was a greatly increased number of IgG4+ cells (>100 per HPF) with an IgG4:IgG ratio of over 80% (Fig. 2). Serum IgG4 levels were not assessed. The patient did not receive treatment and no residual signs of orbital disease were present at 10-months follow up.

Case 3

The patient is a 66-year-old Asian woman who first presented with bilateral eyelid swelling in 1997. She was treated with steroids and her symptoms resolved. In 2004, her eyelid swelling recurred and persisted, and she underwent biopsy of her left eyelid tissue, which led to a histopathological diagnosis of benign lymphoid hyperplasia. Nine years later, the patient presented with recurrent, persistent left eyelid swelling and computed tomography (CT) scan showed moderate, ill-defined enlargement of the left lacrimal gland with extension into the preorbital region and minimal adjacent stranding, suggesting an inflammatory process.

An incisional biopsy was performed. Histologic sections showed orbital fibroadipose tissue without significant fibrosis, but scattered, large, polarized lymphoid follicles with a prominent mantle zone focally penetrating the germinal

Table 1. Clinicopathologic features of cases of PTGC IgG4-ROD.

Case	Sex	Age (years)	Biopsy site	IgG4:IgG ratio	IgG4+ cells/ HPF	Serum IgG4 (normal 3.9–86.4 mg/dL)	Follow up
1	F	66	Left lacrimal gland and preorbit	NA	>100	126	No signs of active disease
2	F	71	Right lacrimal gland and orbit	>40%	>100	NA	No signs of active disease
3	F	55	Right lacrimal gland	>40%	>100	NA	Almost resolved after 2 months

NA = Not assessed.