Desmoid Fibromatosis: A neonatal presentation

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Abstract:
Desmoid tumors describe a rare monoclonal, fibroblastic proliferation characterized by a variable and often unpredictable clinical course. Although histologically benign, desmoids are locally invasive and associated with a high local recurrence rate, but lack metastatic potential. Although desmoid tumors are more common in persons aged 10-40 years than in others, they do occur in young children and older adults, but have rarely been reported in the neonatal age group. We report here a 17 day child who presented with a cervical swelling whose histology was desmoid fibromatosis.

Key words: Desmoid fibromatosis, neonatal presentation

Introduction:
The term desmoid tumour describes a fibromatous proliferative disease that in its biological behaviour is classified between benign fibrous tissue proliferation and fibrosarcoma. According to the World Health Organization, desmoid tumors are defined as “clonal fibroblastic proliferations that arise in the deep soft tissues and are characterized by infiltrative growth and a tendency toward local recurrence but an inability to metastasize” [1].

Case Report
A 17 day male child born of a non-consanguineous marriage presented with a gradually increasing mass in the left supra-clavicular region of the neck which was noticed when the child was seven days old. As the swelling increased in size the child kept the head turned towards the right side. Other than some redness associated with the swelling there was no discharge, difficulty breathing or feeding, decrease in activity, lethargy or excessive crying.

On examination a 2x3 cm sized, round, mobile hard swelling was present. There was redness of the overlying skin but the swelling was non-tender with no transmitted pulsations or movement with deglutition or adherence to overlying skin or underlying structures.

The child was shown to a local physician who referred to us for further evaluation. On regular follow up and is doing well.

Discussion
Desmoid-type fibromatoses are rare tumors, accounting for less than 0.03% of all neoplasms, and less than 3% of soft tissue neoplasms in the general...
Incidence of DTF is estimated at 2-4 per million per year. This benign but monoclonal proliferative soft tissue lesion arises from deep fascia or soft tissues and is derived from mesenchymal stem cells [4, 5]. Two relative incidence peaks are reported in the literature: 6 to 15 years and between puberty and the age of 40[6].

The risk factors associated with the development of desmoid-type fibromatosis include high oestrogen states [like pregnancy], prior surgical trauma, and Gardner’s syndrome, which is caused by inherited mutations in the adenomatous polyposis coli [APC] tumour suppressor gene. The most common tumour sites are the extremities [shoulder and thigh], trunk [chest wall and back], mesentery and head and neck. Among cases of desmoid fibromatoses 7 to 15% of tumors occur in the head and neck [7-9]. A literature search suggested that neonatal presentation of this tumour is rare and very few cases have been reported.

The clinical presentation is variable depending on location and extent of the lesion. Patients with extra-abdominal desmoid fibromatoses may complain of a slow-growing, deep-seated, firm, painless or minimally painful mass. Alternatively, depending on lesion location, patients may complain of neurologic symptoms or even decreased mobility if joints are involved. Patients with intra-abdominal desmoid fibromatoses, particularly mesenteric lesions, may complain of some mild abdominal pain or simply an asymptomatic abdominal mass. Less frequently, these patients may present acutely with bowel perforation, obstruction, or gastrointestinal bleeding as a result of local desmoid tumour invasion. The clinical behaviour of DTF is varied, with some lesions spontaneously regressing[10].

Imaging modalities like ultrasound, CT scan are non-specific where the lesion could be homogeneous or mildly heterogeneous on USG and hypodense or isodense compared to muscle on CT. MRI shows the lesion to be hypointense on T1 images and hyperintense on T2 images [11].

A paper on the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer [EORTC]/Soft Tissue and Bone Sarcoma Group’s position on desmoid fibromatoses reported that a “watch and wait strategy” is the first choice in the treatment of desmoid fibromatoses in all populations and that resection with a clear margin should be considered to be a treatment option if postoperative morbidity is acceptable [12]. Although complete resection [negative microscopic margin] of the tumour is thought to be the reference standard for successful treatment in patients with DF uncontrolled by other treatment approaches, resection in the head and neck region is often difficult because of the presence of vital structures [13]. This problem is worse in paediatric patients. In paediatric patients with desmoid fibromatoses uncontrolled by non-surgical treatments, surgeons sometimes are concerned about performing wide resections because of the high potential of postoperative morbidity. When a large tumour exists close to a vital structure, surgery with an adequate safety margin may be challenging. Although some successful cases with incomplete resection or without surgery have been reported [14-19], a randomized trial of treatment strategies has not yet been reported.

Other treatment alternatives include radiation therapy, chemotherapy and hormonal therapy. Drugs like methotrexate and vinblastine for low grade tumours and cyclophosphamide, doxorubicin, dacarbazine for aggressive lesions have been used. In slowly growing or mildly symptomatic tumours non-cytotoxic drugs, such as anti-estrogens, NSAIDs, imatinibmesylate, hydroxyurea, and interferon-α, orretinoic acid can be effective [20, 21]. Hormonal therapy [tamoxifen, toremifene] has also been used in paediatric patients, but with controversial results. These therapies can be combined with chemotherapy with benefit but the long-term clinical improvement is minimal [22] and the late effects in young children are unknown.
Figure 2: MRI hyper intense lesions deep to the left sternocleido mastoid muscle

Figure 3: Intra-operative picture showing superficial and deep components of the swelling

Figure 4: Post-operative picture showing a healthy scar with no swelling

Conclusion

Desmoid fibromatosis is a locally invasive but non-metastatic disease. Surgical excision with clear margins is the best modality of treatment. In cases where surgical excision carries a significant risk of morbidity additional modalities like limited resection and close follow up, radiation therapy, chemotherapy can be incorporated in the patient’s management.

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References


