Primary psosas abscess

Primary psosas abscess is a rare infection with an often vague and non-specific clinical presentation, especially in children. In Asia and Africa 99.5% of all psosas abscesses are primary, compared with 61% in the United States and Canada and 18.7% in Europe. Approximately 70% of psosas abscesses occur in patients younger than 20 years of age, with a male preponderance of 3:1. Fifty per cent of psoas abscesses occur on the right side, 40% on the left side, and 3% bilaterally. We present the following case and show the magnetic resonance imaging to emphasise the presenting signs, symptoms, and findings of this unusual infection.

A 13 year old white girl was in excellent health until she developed a dull ache in the superior posterior thigh without radiation. She denied any direct trauma or excessive strenuous activity. Over five days she developed progressively severe, dull pain, localised to the posterior hip in association with fever to 38.9°C, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea. She walked with a limp. Her past medical history was non-contributory; she denied smoking, alcohol, drug use, or sexual activity. The girl was 1.52 m tall and weighed 70 kg. Vital signs were normal; temperature rose to 38.9°C within 24 hours of admission. A detailed general physical examination was normal. Abdominal and pelvic examinations were benign without organomegaly or peritoneal signs. Stool for occult blood was negative. Musculoskeletal examination was normal, with the exception of the left hip which showed pain on active and passive motion, particularly abduction, adduction and medial rotation. The range of motion of the hip was normal; there was no localised warmth or palpation tenderness. The gait was antalgic for the left leg.

Laboratory examination showed a white blood cell count of 15.2 × 10⁹ (77% neutrophils/14% lymphocytes/8% monocytes) and platelets were 415 × 10⁹. An erythrocyte sedimentation rate was 35 mm/1st h. An erythrocyte sedimentation rate, and, usually, normal urine analysis.

Plain abdominal radiographs occasionally define an outline of the inflammatory mass. Chest radiographs may disclose minimal pleural effusion or raised hemidiaphragm. An intravenous pyelogram may show deviation of the kidney and ureter. Barium studies may disclose bowel loop displacement and associated gastrointestinal diseases. However, the most accurate diagnostic imaging is computed tomography scan (CT) or MRI, which typically show a low density lesion of the psoas muscle and gas within the muscle itself. There may be rim enhancement of the abscess wall with contrast medium injection. Definitive diagnosis is made by fine needle aspiration under imaging guidance, and microbial culturing of the causative organism. If abdominal CT or MRI is unavailable, ultrasonography may demonstrate the inflammatory mass. Gallium-67 scanning may be useful in the diagnosis of psosas abscesses and detection of concomitant infectious foci.

Diagnostic features of psosas abscesses include bacterial infection of the hip, avascular necrosis of the hip, irritable hip, necrotising fasciitis of the psosas muscle, pyelonephritis, pelvic inflammatory disease, retrocaecal appendicitis, disc, avascular necrosis, vertebral or pelvic osteomyelitis, and epidural abscess. These entities should be distinguishable upon the correlation of history, physical examination, laboratory tests, and imaging studies.

The cause of primary psosas abscess remains uncertain. Proposed mechanisms of psosas abscess formation include haematogenous spread from primary infectious foci or local trauma with intra-abdominal haemorrhage formation predisposing to abscess development. In secondary psosas abscess the most commonly associated disorder is Crohn’s disease; other disorders include ankylosing spondylitis, colonic inflammatory or neoplasm, disc infections, and a variety of intra-abdominal or retroperitoneal infections.

Primary psosas abscesses are caused by a single organism in 87.5% of cases: primarily Staphylococcus aureus (88.4%), streptococci (4.9%), and Escherichia coli (2.8%). Blood cultures are positive in 41.7%, usually for Staphylococcus aureus. In the past decade the majority of patients with a primary psosas abscess were intravenous drug users (86%) infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (57%). Treatment for primary psosas abscess includes percutaneous drainage combined with systemic antibiotic administration. Surgical drainage is preferred for the patients in whom the psosas abscess is associated with underlying bowel disease. With appropriate treatment, psosas abscess rarely results in death (2.5%). Death from psosas abscess is associated more commonly with inadequate or delayed drainage, or both. Our patient responded well to antibiotic treatment and recovered completely.

Klippel-Feil syndrome in the prehispanic population of El Hierro (Canary Islands)

Klippel-Feil syndrome is an uncommon alteration (1:40 000 births), mainly a clustering of the cervical spine. 

V Klippel-Feil syndrome is an uncommon clustering of the cervical spine. 

Islands) 

Klippel-Feil syndrome in prehispanic ossuaries of El Hierro (Canary Islands), we noted: 

1 A left hemiatlas (fig 2B); although it is possible that the right body of the bone was partially fused with the left one (and was not recovered in the archaeological excavation), the posterior end of the arch was neither fractured nor fused to any other bony structure, thus pointing to a developmental defect. 

2 A C5-6 block, consisting of two vertebrae (fig 1), and a normal medial canal. The body of the third vertebra shows intense degenerative signs. 

3 A well preserved atlas bone, with an incomplete anterior part of the left arch, 

with sharp, fine proximal, and distal ends (fig 2A), supporting an underlying developmental defect rather than an acquired one. 

4 A left hemiatlas (fig 2B); although it is possible that the right body of the bone was partially fused with the left one (and was not recovered in the archaeological excavation), the posterior end of the arch was neither fractured nor fused to any other bony structure, thus pointing to a developmental defect. 


Kao PF, Tsai KH, Tsai MF, Yen TC. 


McAlpine W, Clarke G. The diagnosis and treatment of psosas abscess: a 12 year review. 

A well preserved atlas bone, with an incomplete anterior part of the left arch, 

Haematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT) in a patient with Sjögren’s syndrome and lung malt lymphoma cured lymphoma not the autoimmune disease

Haematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT) has been used in an attempt to control autoimmune diseases that respond poorly to conventional treatment, or as a way
of readjusting the immunological balance.\(^1\) As far as we know, only one case of primary Sjögren’s (SS) has been reported,\(^1\) with an unfavourable outcome. Another patient received an allogeneic bone marrow transplant and also had an unfavourable outcome.\(^1\) We describe here a further patient with primary SS who underwent HSCT for a non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma affecting the lung (large cell, mucosa associated lymphoid tissue (MALT) lymphoma) and review the literature on the effects of HSCT on the autoimmune features and histopathological changes in primary SS.

**Case report**

A white woman, aged 42, developed recurrent parotid swelling and symptoms of sicca syndrome, with a Schirmer’s test I of 5 mm in the right eye and 4 mm in the left eye. Break up time was 6 s and sialometry was < 1 ml. She had periodic relapses of her parotid swelling. In August 1994 (aged 57) lung x-rays and computed tomography disclosed a parenchymal nodule of 3 cm in diameter in the basal left lobe. She underwent a lobectomy that disclosed a MALT of the large cell B lymphoma histotype, stage IE. In December 1994 two more nodules in the right lobe, with hilar bilateral adenomegaly, led to the diagnosis of a relapse of her lymphoma, which had progressed to stage IV. She then received six courses of F-MACHOP (vincristine 0.5 mg/m\(^2\) at hours 0 and 12; cyclophosphamide 800 mg/m\(^2\) intravenous (IV) bolus at hour 36, 5-fluorouracil 15 mg/kg IV for six hours at hour 36, cytosine-arabinoside 1000 mg/m\(^2\) IV for six hours at hour 42, doxorubicin 60 mg/m\(^2\) IV bolus at hour 48, methotrexate 500 mg/m\(^2\) IV for six hours at hour 60, prednisone 60 mg/m\(^2\) from day 1 to 14), and folicin rescue (20 mg/m\(^2\) IV bolus at hours 84, 96, 108, 120), with a prompt reduction of hilar adenopathies and a net decrease of pulmonary nodule size. However, no complete remission was recorded. She was then offered the possible chance of an HSCT. This patient (patient 1) reports the myeloablation, conditioning, recovery, and reinfusion of stem cells. After three years of follow up no relapse of the lymphoma has occurred. Sjögren syndrome after transplantation was unmodified, however, with a persistently poor function of the salivary glands, an unchanged serology (antineuticular antibody titre 1/2560), and an unchanged histopathology (Chisholm-Mason grading = 4) despite having mild fibrosis of the salivary glands.

In table 1 we give the characteristics of the other patient with primary SS (No 2), previously reported. It can be seen that the conditioning regimen, previous treatment, stem cell rescue, and bone marrow reconstitution were different. However, in this case, also, SS was not cured and there was no remission. An immunological reassessment showed persistence of the immunological imbalance and poor function of the salivary apparatus. Table 2 shows the results for patients with three more common autoimmune rheumatic diseases (rheumatoid arthritis (RA), systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), and scleroderma (SSc)) treated with HSCT and who received an adequate follow up.\(^2\) A total of 270 such patients are registered so far in the European Bone Marrow Transplant/EULAR database, but the number who have received adequate follow up is much smaller. Current data suggest that best results have been obtained in RA, the worst in SSc, suggesting that T helper 2 oriented diseases have a poorer response.

Results for SS seem to confirm this because HSCT cured lymphoma but did not improve the autoimmune disease. No changes were recorded in the function of salivary glands, or in the synthesis of ANA, or the histopathology. The other case reported did show some early improvement in the function of the glands, but no improvement afterwards and an infection leading to death. Early recurrence of autoimmune features and of autoantibodies was seen in patients with SLE and CREST.\(^1\) We do not know whether various conditioning regimens or myeloablation approaches (with or without T cell depletion) might result in different outcomes. It seems unlikely that T cell depletion would offer a better prospect, especially in view of the increased risk of long term immunosuppression, lymphoproliferative diseases, and infections. On the other hand, allogeneic bone marrow transplantation, even though clearly appealing given the chance of eradicating the intrinsic stem cell defect,\(^3\) does not represent a definite cure either and the related morbidity-mortality still remains too high to be accepted as a possible alternative. As benefits have been seen in around two thirds of the cases treated so far, controlled trials in the three major rheumatic diseases are eagerly awaited.

We gratefully acknowledge the invaluable help we received from Professor A. Tyndall, who provided us with the latest data available of the EBMT/EULAR registry on haematopoietic stem cell transplantation in autoimmune diseases.

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**Table 1** Lymphoma characteristics, conditioning regimens, side effects and outcome of the two female patients so far studied, after haematopoietic stem cell transplantation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Patient 1</th>
<th>Patient 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
<td>NHL* of the lung (large cells MALT* lymphoma)</td>
<td>Immunoblastic B lymphoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First line treatment</td>
<td>F-MACHOP 6 cycles</td>
<td>VACOP-B* followed by VIFEP*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditioning regimens</td>
<td>ARA-C* 200 mg x 2/day x 4</td>
<td>VIFEP* followed by VIFEP*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VP16* 200 mg x 2/day x 4</td>
<td>BCNU 300 mg/m(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CTX 1500 mg x 4</td>
<td>Etoposide 800 mg/m(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BCNU* 200 mg</td>
<td>Cytarabine 1600 mg/m(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinfusion</td>
<td>MNC* 4.5 x 10(^5)/kg</td>
<td>Melphalan 140 mg/m(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CD14 0.9 x 10(^5)/kg</td>
<td>MNC 2.42 x 10(^5)/kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CD3 not counted</td>
<td>CD44 4.6 x 10(^5)/kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Days to PMN* x 1 x 10(^5)= 10 days</td>
<td>CD3 37.03 x 10(^5)/kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Days to PMN* x 2 x 10(^5)= 10 days</td>
<td>Days to PMN x 1 x 10(^5)= 11 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Days to PMN* x 2 x 10(^5)= 10 days</td>
<td>Days to PMN x 1 x 10(^5)= 18 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literature on continuous lymphoma remission after 3 years</td>
<td>Died 20 months after transplantation for Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sides effects/outcomes</td>
<td>Alive in complete continuous lymphoma remission after 3 years</td>
<td>No remission of autoimmune disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Died 20 months after transplantation for Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) NHL = non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma; MALT = mucosa associated lymphoid tissue; F-MACHOP: F = 5-fluorouracil, M = methotrexate, A = Adriamycin, C = cyclophosphamide, H = doxorubicin, O = Oncovin, P = prednisone; ARA-C = arabinoside-C; VP16 = etoposide; CTX = cyclophosphamide; BCNU = carmustine; MNC = monoclonal cells; PMN = polymorphonuclear cells; Plt = platelets; VACOP-B: V = Vepesid, A = Adriamycin, C = cyclophosphamide, O = vincristine, P = prednisone, B = bleomycin; VIFEP = vinblastine, I = ifosfamide, P = prednisone, E = etoposide.

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**Table 2** Report of the European group\(^4\) on the three major rheumatological autoimmune diseases treated with autologous stem cell transplantation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autoimmune disease</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Died (No (%))</th>
<th>Transplant related death (No (%))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systemic sclerosis</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13 (39)</td>
<td>9 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLE</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2 (14)</td>
<td>2 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sjögren’s (present series)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 (50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>17 (20)</td>
<td>12 (14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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G FACCAROLI R DAMATO S DE VITA
Division of Rheumatology, Udine Medical School, University of Udine, 33100 Udine, Italy

R FANINI D DAMIANI M BACCARANI
Division of Haematology, Udine Medical School

gianfranco.ferraccioli@med.uniud.it

www.annrheumdis.com

Castleman’s disease

A 65 year old woman presented in February 1998 with joint pains, mild weight loss, and a low grade irregular fever. Initially, pain was localised around both shoulder joints. Subsequently, elbows, wrists, hips, and knees were affected, with morning stiffness, but without particular swelling. The symptoms were accentuated by movement, but also persisted during the night, often keeping the patient awake. On clinical examination, there was limited painful movement of the shoulders and hips, with a marked reduction in strength. The small joints of the hands and feet were not affected. No other pathological conditions were found. Laboratory findings showed a marked increase in erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR, >100 mm/1st h), hyper-γ, globulinaemia and a mild anaemia, whereas enzymatic activity (serum aspartate aminotransferase, serum alanine aminotransferase, alkaline phosphatase, lactate dehydrogenase, and creatine kinase) was within the normal range. A diagnosis of polymyalgia rheumatica was made and a rapid and marked clinical improvement was obtained with low dose steroid treatment (prednisone 12.5 mg/day). Pain disappeared, muscle strength and joint function became normal within a week. A decrease in ESR (to 40 mm/1st h) and γ globulinaemia was noted and maintained. The clinical condition remained satisfactory during 1998, with a complete normalisation of ESR and γ globulinaemia after three months.

In January 1999 she developed jaundice with pruritus and a subcontinuous fever (38.5–39°C). Axial tomography and nuclear magnetic resonance disclosed compression of the biliary duct by a compact, well defined retropancreatic mass (about 4 cm in diameter). A 38-year old man had similar symptoms. The mass was removed and histological examination disclosed a lymph nodal archi

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Figure 1 The post-capillary vessels penetrate the expanded follicles perpendicularly (“lollipop image”). (×400.)


Correspondence to: Dr A Riccio, via Aniello Falcone, 386–80127, Napoli, Italy


Letter

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Figure 1 The post-capillary vessels penetrate the expanded follicles perpendicularly (“lollipop image”). (×400.)