Case Report

The Cephalad Malposition of a Kidney as a Thoracic Abnormality on Tc-99m MDP Bone Scintigraphy

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Abstract

Thoracic location of an aberrant kidney is the least encountered renal malposition. We present a 62-year-old female patient with ovarian malignant mixed epithelial tumor complicated with massive ascites and right hemidiaphragmatic eventration. The cephalad malpositioned right kidney was found incidentally as an intrathoracic mass on Tc-99m MDP bone scintigraphy. (Tzu Chi Med J 2008;20(4):314–317)

Keywords:
Diaphragmatic eventration
Ovarian tumors
Renal malposition
Tc-99m MDP bone scintigraphy

1. Introduction

The cephalad location of an aberrant kidney is a rarely encountered situation, accounting for less than 5% of renal ectopies [1]. It is more commonly seen in male patients on the left side. The exact mechanism of cephalad malposition of the kidney is not apparent; nevertheless, this entity has been associated with some complications and born or acquired abnormalities [1,2]. Bearing in mind the possibility of a thoracic kidney obviates unnecessary intervention and harm.

We present a patient with ovarian cancer whose Tc-99m methylene diphosphonate (MDP) bone scan for a survey of possible bone metastasis revealed an unusual thoracic mass with increased radioactivity, corresponding to a high malpositioned right kidney.

2. Case report

A 62-year-old female patient had hypertension and depression, and was under medical treatment for more than 10 years. She had been experiencing intermittent attacks of shortness of breath since 2 years before this presentation. This kind of discomfort subsided after rest and she did not pay much attention to it. However, the situation had progressively worsened during the 6 months prior to this presentation, and she complained of poor appetite and body weight loss.

Physical examination revealed abdominal distention with mild tenderness. No pitting edema or cardiac murmur was found. Chest X-ray revealed right hemidiaphragm elevation. Due to body weight loss,
tumor markers were checked and revealed elevated serum levels of carcinoembryonic antigen (235 ng/mL) and CA125 (250 U/mL). Upper gastrointestinal panendoscopy and colon barium enema study results were negative. Gynecologic evaluation and sonography disclosed an adnexal mass and massive ascites. Finally, the patient underwent debulking surgery (abdominal total hysterectomy + bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy + pelvic and para-aortic lymph node sampling + appendectomy + partial omentectomy) and adjuvant chemotherapy. The results of surgical pathology proved malignant mixed epithelial tumor (squamous cell carcinoma and mucinous adenocarcinoma). She tolerated the treatment procedures well and was discharged in fair general condition.

Tc-99m MDP bone scintigraphy was performed during the tumor staging work-up. Bone metastasis was not identified. However, a mass showing increased uptake was observed in the lower medial aspect of the right hemithorax (arrows). Note that the right kidney is absent in the usual position despite lack of relevant surgical history in this patient.

3. Discussion

Cephalad malposition of the kidney is a rare condition. Most cases have no symptoms referable to the malposition and it may only be discovered incidentally on routine chest radiography or during thoracotomy (1,2). The exact mechanism for the formation remains unclear, although some researchers have proposed explanations. Cranial migration of the embryonic metanephrons occurs from the 6th to 9th week of gestation (3). Normally, the kidneys ascend to lumbar sites just below the adrenal glands, and one may become arrested at any site in the pelvis above its
origin. In contrast, the ascending developing kidneys rarely “overshoot” their intended location and ascend to a higher location than usual. Failed or delayed closure of the pleuropelitoneal membrane may allow excessive renal ascent, which may be another cause of high ectopic kidneys (2,3). In addition, diaphragm traumatic holes, acquired or congenital Bochdalek foramen hernia, and evagination of the diaphragm may account for the aberrance. It is a rational speculation foramen hernia, and eventration of the diaphragm may of high ectopic kidneys [2,3]. In addition, diaphragm excessive renal ascent, which may be another cause sure of the pleuroperitoneal membrane may allow to a higher location than usual. Failed or delayed clo-

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An ectopic kidney can be confirmed using the results of functional assessment with intravenous pyelo-
graphy or Tc-99m DMSA (dimercaptosuccinic acid) scintigraphy (21). Although these studies were not performed in our patient, the cephalad malpositioned kidney can be identified using typical findings on contrast-enhanced computed tomography and by direct inspection during surgical exploration.

In summary, cephalad malposition of the kidney should be kept in mind in the differential diagnosis of thoracic tumors. Most of the patients have no symp-
toms owing to this anomaly, and they are discovered incidentally using imaging findings and require no medical or surgical intervention (1,2,22). Recognition of this possibility obviates incorrect interpretation in imaging studies (23,24), avoids unnecessary ag-
gressive interventions, and prompts accurate patient management.

References